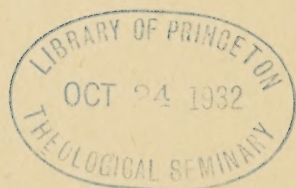


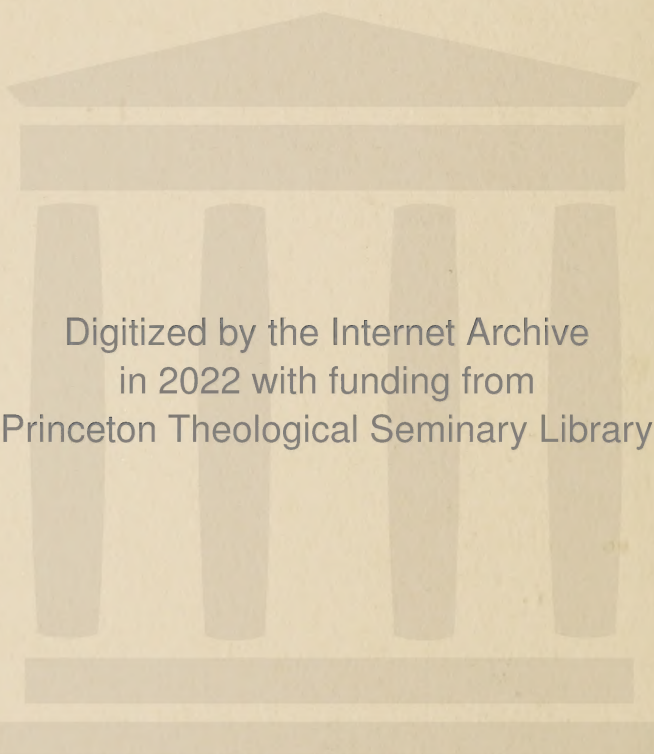
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The shout of the King

THE SHOUT OF THE KING

ERNEST RAYMOND



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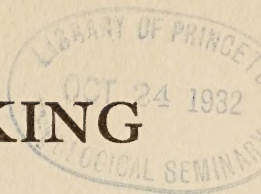
✓
**THE
SHOUT OF THE KING**

BY
✓
ERNEST RAYMOND

Author of "Damascus Gate," "Tell England," etc.

NEW  YORK

GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY



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THE SHOUT OF THE KING
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AUTHOR'S NOTE

I would desire to say by way of preface to this book that all its chapters were originally written to be spoken from platform or pulpit and to audiences large enough to require from the speaker a high degree of compression and an exceptional vividness of phrase. After much thought it seemed to me best neither to expand their matter nor chasten their form, lest they lose any of that enthusiasm and force which the contemplation of a great audience inspires in him who would speak to it.

E. R.

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THE SHOUT OF THE KING

Stay! Means it nothing to my handicraft
That God has chosen for His earthly throne
No pure and lovely output of His own;
That Fire, and Wind, and Water do not waft
Down to our waiting eyes His kingly shape;
But, rather, He has deigned to set His feet
In bread, which men have wrought from garnered
wheat,
And wine, their human product from the grape?

So prospers He our handicraft; and lo!
Whether I rule a world, or plough the soil;
Dream symphonies, or break the crusted sod—
Or even sing this little song—I know
Heaven is hidden in my daily toil:
My work shall prosper, being filled with God.

ERNEST RAYMOND.

THE SHOUT OF THE KING

I: THE SHOUT OF THE KING

I

I HOPE that whenever you've heard the story of Balaam and his inability to curse the encamped Israel you've shivered suitably with pride and excitement as you listened to his bewildered cry: "How can I curse whom God hath not cursed? . . . He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither has he seen perverseness in Israel. The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them."

Balaam stood upon a high place in a mountain range and overlooked the plains of Moab. With him stood the king of Moab, pointing to the cause of his dismay. And Balaam, looking along the direction of the king's forefinger, saw the camp of Israel arrayed in squares like gardens on either bank of an irrigating stream: he saw the lines of the tribal tents like rows of cedar-trees or wood-

aloes beside the waters. And, being a mystic, a clairvoyant, and liable to the trance-vision, he went off into an ecstasy, wherein all that was spurious and misleading was lifted like a veil from before his eyes, and he saw a clear vision of things as they were, and as they must be hereafter.

First, he saw the true character of the People of Israel—a people that for the sake of God was separated from the world—a people, as he says, that shall dwell alone and shall not be numbered among the nations. In other words, they have no abiding country, and yet the whole world is their wandering ground.

Then he saw their future, and, in revealing it, said, as it might be: “I hear them coming, and their coming is triumphant. I hear the tramping of their feet like the tramping of the feet of conquerors. They are victorious, and hark! the shout of a king is among them.” And by “the shout of the king” he meant the shout of a crowd of people who have a king in their midst.

Then he passed to a further vision yet, vaguer because further, and he said: “I see dimly who the king is. It is he that shall be the Star of Jacob and the Sceptre of Israel—he that the marching Israel shall bring in triumph to the nations. I shall see him, but not now. I shall behold him, but not nigh. He shall smite the

corners of Moab, and Israel shall do valiantly."

No wonder the king of Moab stamped with impatience and wrath and said, "For God's sake, neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all."

II

The interpretation of Balaam's vision shall be easy for us. The king of Moab and the men of Moab represent Entrenched Wrong, alarmed, dismayed at those whose advance threatens their security, and (like all evil men when first they scent in the air the briny tang of oncoming defeat) scoffing and reviling. The tented Israel, arrayed like a people at war, is the body of true Christians: not, I think, a body co-extensive with any organised Christian communion, but the *true* Christians; the separated people; the people that shall dwell alone and not be numbered among the nations; the true souls; those whom God knows as **His**; those, perhaps, who have been called the soul of the church as distinct from the body of the church; those who by their active campaigning, or just by the reproach of their lives, really threaten the fortified places of Evil. And the king? In a minute, we shall speak at length of the king. It is enough now to say that the true souls alone possess the king, and will assuredly bring him into his own.

III

The reason why I am interpreting this vision of Balaam for you is this: I would have you, once and for all, decide that, if you belong to the true cohorts of the king, you cannot for a moment be among those strange Christians who bleat and whine about the failure of their Church. You will never discuss with the men of the world how badly your war is going, and how you contemplate defeat. You won't have moments of fraternising with the men of Moab, in which you tell them what a pity you think it is that the battle is lost. And your refraining from all these things won't be just because it isn't good policy; just because it's bad for the morale of your own comrades, and particularly fine for the morale of Moab; but simply because it isn't true; simply because it's a damnable lie; simply because it's one of the most successful bits of Moab's propaganda, whereby he seeks to dishearten the king's men. "Come, curse me Israel. Spread me disorder in their ranks, that they may think that truth is against them; for, verily, I fear their onward march."—"How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? The Lord their God is with them, and the shout of a king is among them."

No, you will do the opposite: you will say to

the men of Moab, and to the scoffers, "You poor people, I have it in my heart to be sorry for you, because it's sad to be on the losing side; and that's where you are, be assured. We are the winning side. It's our faith that shall overcome the world." And again, your saying of this won't be just because it's good policy; just because, after a decisive battle, the generals of both sides invariably attend a *Te Deum* in thanksgiving for their victory; but because it happens to be the truth of God; because you Christians alone possess the king; and who shall march to victory without the king?

IV

The king. Let us be sure we know what we mean by the king.

Now the thought that you must master is this. An idea is the most powerful thing in the world. A great idea is infinitely more powerful in the long run than ten thousand howitzers or twenty million armed men. It rides the seas and crosses from continent to continent more surely than battle fleets. A great idea gradually wins an empire over the minds of the greatest men; and it is they who sway the world. So a great idea marches—that is the wonder of it. It marches more surely than the armies of Alexander, Cæsar, and Na-

poleon. And if it be truth, nothing can stop its march. That's why the biggest minds among bad men are always dismayed when a great idea begins to march. Your sworn militarists and profiteers, how they scoff at the League of Nations! Say the kings of Moab: "God, or the devil, help me from this approaching truth! Come, curse me Israel!" But those who can see behind the specious trappings of temporary success, those who can see the true trends of thought and the real soul of things, reply: "How can I curse whom God hath not cursed? God is among them, for God camps with Truth."

Truth, then, marches. And Christ is the Truth of Man. Get that phrase right home. Christ is the Truth of Man. Christ is the true expression of Man. If Man were true, he would be like Christ. Christ is the truth about Man. Therefore Christ is the King of Man. And I mean "king," not in the sense which has been discredited in the thoughts of the world—an unnatural burden placed by conquest, or the caprice of a god, upon a subject people, but the *natural* king—a higher version, that is, of the king of the wolf-pack, or the king of the stag-herd. Christ is the King of the Pack. We are conscious of being our noblest when we are thinking most like Christ. We are conscious of being our loftiest when we act like Him. We all—say what we

will—though we try to curse Christianity—though we neither curse it at all nor bless it at all—we all know that Christ has determined for ever the true code of living. Christ is not only the Word of God, but he is also the Last Word. The Last Word has been uttered on the question of God, and on the question of Man.

To the Christ-thought the finest minds will always surrender. The true souls will camp around it. Therefore we say, "Nothing can stop its march. Nothing can arrest it for any length of time. It may be held up for a moment. It may even be driven back. But such reverses can only be momentary, and the Christ-thought takes to the road again. Those who march with it march to certain victory, for the shout of a king is among them."

V

Who, then, will help in the really gay cause of bringing the king into his own? There may be one or two of you who have been ready to curse Israel, and to fight against it. Well, I won't deal with the sin of that, but just with the futility of it. You cannot fight against truth. You are playing a losing game. Or a few of you may have been placid and indifferent, neither cursing them at all, nor blessing them at all.

Well, that is simply poor. That is unworthy of you. You can do better things than that. You are too noble to continue long in that. Some of you on the other hand are conscious of being king's men; and if so, then shout like them that conquer. Maybe you will not see the king come into his own—of course you won't—Truth marches, but it marches slowly—no, you will fall by the road; but you will be content to do so, for you will know that you have brought the king a little on his way, and your closing eyes will see him still advancing.

II: SONS OF THE MORNING

I

READING a few days ago the work of a classic English writer, I struck the remarkable sentence: "We are sons of yesterday, not of the morning." By which the writer meant that our yesterdays determine what we shall be; what we made ourselves as children we must be as men; the child is father to the man; the past has inevitably predestined our future; we cannot escape the fatherhood of yesterday, and there is no hope in the morning. We cannot say, "Tomorrow I will begin again. I am tired of my character as I have formed it, and I despise much that I see in it. In the morning I will start anew." No, our habits are our tyrants; the leopard cannot change its spots; and it is fond nonsense to think of saying, "Like Venus from the sea, I will be born again out of the morning air, an untrammelled, virgin soul." No, no, alas, "we are sons of yesterday, not of the morning."

And, as I read that sentence, I was impressed with two things—the perfection of its literary expression, and (for the Christian) the glory of its untruth. Never was a sentence more beauti-

fully turned—"we are sons of yesterday, not of the morning"—and yet never was there a sentence more demanding the defiant denial of the Christian preacher. We fling it back in the face of its author with the words: "Thank God, we are *not* sons of yesterday, but always—always—sons of the morning."

II

For, if that sentence of George Meredith be true; if the leopard cannot change its spots; if we cannot rise superior to the tyranny of yesterday's habits; then are we of all men most miserable; then is life a despair; and we are playing a losing game.

But it is only a half-truth. A half-truth it *is*, of course; and full, perhaps, of warning. I need not labour that. It has been taught us whensoever we have heard a sermon on the text, "What men sow that shall they reap," or on the solemn quotation, "Sow an action, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny." But who sets it up for the whole truth sets up a lie. It would be the whole truth but for a glorious intervention: it would be the whole truth had not something been hurled into life from without and deflected its natural course. That glorious intruder is the gospel of Christ, the

gospel of grace and power. And by reason of that gospel the true Christian message is the word of the saintly, old priest, who took a degraded woman by the hand, and, leading her to his doorway and pointing to the glow in the east and the morning coming over the hills, said: "Every sunrise, my daughter, a soul can be born again."

III

"Ah," you say, "if only I could believe it! But so often I have begun again. And always I have found the tyranny of yesterday too strong, and have dropped back into the old habits that I despise." That's what you are thinking, isn't it? Well, if so, it shows that you lack the necessary things to start with, faith and hope. "If only I could believe it! If only I could think that I were a child of the morning! If only—" You see, you lack faith. "Ah, but I have tried it before, and always failed, and I should fail again." You see, you lack hope. Shall we start this time with faith and hope?

Now, that we may have faith, and a faith that is not easily discouraged, let us see exactly what we shall expect to happen, supposing we seek at once the grace of the gospel. Let us not expect too much. Let us not expect an immediate miracle—a sudden and complete conversion. Let

us not think that on the First of April we shall be a completely different character from what we were on the Thirty-first of March. No, this is what we are going to do, and this is what we are going to expect.

First, we are going to believe that there *is* a power which can be had for the asking, and it is called grace: and that this grace is a tonic force, a new, invigorating source of life: and that this power is from without, independent of our past, and having no proportion to our merits—nay, the worse our past is, the larger, very likely, will be the free gift of power, for we shall need it more. That's what we are going to believe, and it is truth; or, if it isn't, there is no good God, and the sooner we die and are forgotten, the better. But it *is* God's fact, or the evidence of twenty centuries, and twenty million Christian men, brown and white, and old and young, and very wise and very simple, must be scoffed away. Believing this, then, we are going to put ourselves in touch with this grace, and henceforward we shall daily pray for it; we shall make of our morning prayer a daily Pentecost, rising from our knees and saying with a feeling of rejuvenation and joy, "Yes, I feel I have received power from on high": but we shan't worry if somehow, try as we would, we couldn't make our prayers other than formal and dead: we shall know that

we have prayed, and that therefore something must happen. Then, if we are confirmed, we are going to come regularly to the Holy Communion, which is the very special way of receiving grace; and we shall not worry if sometimes we do not get any remarkable spiritual experience at that service, and the whole thing has seemed rather dry and cold, for we shall know that we have done as we were told and therefore something must have happened—it is not always that God vouchsafes us wonderful spiritual experiences.

That'll be our spiritual life: a quiet, ordered, perfectly happy spiritual life, never ruffled, never panicky, always trusting. In quietness and confidence shall be our strength. And, as a result, what shall we expect? Not, we have said, a sudden metamorphosis, a complete transfiguration of our character—no, not that, but a silent revolution. That is the work of grace—no noisy *coup d'état*, in which the old régime is suddenly and bloodily overthrown, but a gradual and easy revolution—a steady sweetening of our sourer parts; a steady softening of the hard and ungenerous in us; a steady strengthening of the weak and vacillating; a steady upgrowth of love. It may be quite a while before we observe the work of this silent revolution. It's silent, you see. But it is working; and one day we shall awake to this gradual sanctification; we shall be amazed to see

how much farther the transformation has gone than we ever dared to hope; and we shall laugh the laugh of knowledge at such a sentence as, "We are sons of yesterday, not of the morning." We'll say: "I seem to have broken all connection with yesterday; in fact, I can see very little resemblance between what I am now and what I was when I was a child of yesterday. Now I believe—I know—that it is perfectly possible to be born again of the morning."

IV

Very well, then, we have faith—faith in grace, that power that is the key to the morning. We have hope—hope for a silent revolution.

The conversion of St. Paul is our parable: but alas! in the past we have always misread it. We have thought of it as a sudden and complete conversion outside the walls of Damascus, whereas, if we read his story carefully and his self-revelation in his letters, we shall see that he only took his first step, when he fell to the ground and said: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" It is clear to me that it was a long time before the silent revolution, which then began, was complete: before he finally overcame his self-pride, his impatience, his imperious obstinacy, his haughty egotism. It was pretty obvious that he had by

no means conquered the old Adam, when he turned in wrath upon the High Priest, who had commanded them to smite him on the mouth, and said: "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall." It was different from our Lord before the High Priest. "If I have done ill, testify against me; but if well, why smitest thou me?" Not yet had he reached the stature of Christ. But grace was working the silent revolution in him, and he had nearly reached his full height when he wrote: "I am ready to be offered." Christ's grace had been sufficient for him. "I was the chief of sinners, but by his grace I am what I am. I am the least of the apostles, not worthy to be called an apostle, but I have wrought more abundantly than they all—yet not I, but the grace of God which was in me."

St. Paul is perhaps the prince of the sons of the morning, but he is only one. Peter is another, and, for that matter, the whole apostolic band; and many a thousand others—St. Augustine, who tells the tale anew in his "Confessions," and our own St. Thomas of Canterbury—all leopards who changed their spots; who, scorning to remain sons of yesterday, were born again of the morning.

See what St. Paul meant (and he ought to know) when he said: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ

. . . that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man: that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith: that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. Now unto him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think—"you see, ask all that you want, all that in your most sanguine moments you can imagine yourself possessing, and there's more for you still—"unto him be glory throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

III: THE DESIRE OF NATIONS

I

MORE than five hundred years before Christ there lived in an Indian village, on the southern and sunnier side of the Himalayas, a wealthy youth who spent most of his time hunting in the jungle or love-making in the groves. But he was not happy. He felt, as we all do sometimes, the complete failure of pleasure to give any final satisfaction or serenity of soul. So there came upon him, as there has come upon thousands of others, a fierce desire to seek happiness by a life of seclusion and asceticism. And it was while he was contemplating this great step that his servants approached and told him that his first child, a son, was born. He sighed and shook his head saying, "One more tie to break." That night the Indian village broke into festivity and choral dancing to honour the birth, but the young father would take no part. And, when the merry-making had died out, and the dancing girls had dropped asleep on the alternating slips of moonlight and darkness, he arose in an agony and went to his wife's chamber. There she lay, the oil lamp lighting up the lines of her form, and

the flowers that surrounded her, and the baby on her arm. The husband longed to kiss both, but feared to wake them; and, without a word, he went into the moonlight and rode away. He had gone to think out what was wrong in the ways of societies and men. He had gone to seek the desire of all nations and peoples, which is soul-serenity.

In the mountains he lived a hermit's life; and so terrible were his self-inflicted penances that his fame echoed (we are told) all over the Ganges country like a great bell hung in the canopy of the sky. But never could he find soul-serenity. His rigorous asceticism and mortification left him as dissatisfied as the old sensuous repletion of the pleasurable days. And with an ill-nourished brain he couldn't think. So, though it shocked his admirers, and muffled the great bell, he decided to eat ordinary food like an ordinary man. For this apostasy his disciples deserted him, and he was obliged to wander alone, battling to find for himself and for ungrateful men the Way—the way to soul-serenity: one of the many lonely figures that have done great honour to the story of human thought.

It was one day under a tree by the bank of a river that, with blinding suddenness, the revelation came to him. He sat there, hour upon hour, not heeding the passage of day and night. Then

he rose up to proclaim his message to the world.

His name was Gautama, but men called him the Buddha. I pray you think of him, not as the dark, little squatting idol of the temples, but as the solitary, high-souled thinker—a man like you and me, with the same desire for clarity of mind and tranquillity of soul.

This was the revelation of Gautama, the Buddha. He called it the Way, the Path. Selfishness, he said, is the key-word to suffering. With the total elimination of self goes victory over pain. All desires—bodily desires, worldly desires, even spiritual desires, such as the desire for conscious personal immortality—must be thrown off like the discarded skin of a snake. The soul must lose its ego, if it is to attain serenity. And the perfect serenity he called Nirvana.

II

In the same century, the sixth before Christ, on the northern and darker side of the Himalayas—far away in China—rose another great teacher, Lao-Tse. He is not the founder of Taoism, but we may call him the prophet of it. There was already in existence, before he spoke his word, the Taoism, the religion of the Tao. (Tao means the Way, for all religions adopt this beautiful word.)

Lao-Tse was the royal librarian in a great Chinese city, and a man who strove to lead a virtuous life in full accordance with the Tao. But he was dissatisfied, and decided to withdraw from men that he might think. He left his library, and walked to the gate of the city which stood at the entrance of a mountain pass. The warden of the gate looked strangely at him, and, going after his retreating figure, said, "You are about to withdraw yourself from sight. I beg you to compose for me a book before you go." So, on a sudden, even as Gautama, the Buddha, had done, Lao-Tse gave to the world his conception of the real Tao, the way to serenity of soul, the desire of all nations. He made for the gatekeeper a writing. "And then," says his Chinese chronicler, "he went away, and it is not known where he died."

This is the writing of Lao-Tse; or, at least, among much that is uncommendable, this is what is best in the writing of Lao-Tse.

The way of men, he says, their works and their service, must be free from all selfish purpose. Their working must be without pride, and without assumption of ownership. Look at the grass, and the hedgerows, and the trees, how they spring up without a word spoken, and grow without a claim on their own production or any dis-

play of pride. That is the most beautiful and practical idea of Lao-Tse: work and serve without striving and crying, without pride or jealousy or acquisitiveness, like the young grass. I quote his words: "It is the way of Tao not to act from any personal motive; to conduct affairs without feeling the trouble of them; to account the great as small, and the small as great; to recompense injury with kindness."

And there, at his noblest, let us leave Lao-Tse.

III

In the same sixth century before Christ—who can doubt that God had decided that the hour had come for a stirring of men's hearts towards higher things—it was the time, mark you, when the Jews were purging their scriptures and reaching their highest ideas in the Babylonian captivity—it was the moment when the thrilling voice of the Deutero-Isaiah began to sing, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God"—in the same sixth century before Christ rose another great Chinaman, Confucius, who sought to find the way to individual happiness, and to national and civic peace. And perhaps the sweetest note of Confucius was his refusal to withdraw from mankind. "With whom should

I associate," he said, "but with suffering men?" and he set up a whole system of ethical and ceremonial rules, which were to govern the intercourse with his fellows of the Ideal Man—the Noble Man—or the Superior Man, as he called him. The Superior Man of Confucius is nothing like that conceited bully, the Superman of Nietzsche, but a fine, suave creature of elegant manners and quiet, smooth deportment. You will see the stamp of Confucius on the most degraded Chinaman in Limehouse to-day.

IV

Let us only take in mind what is loftiest in the teaching of these strong souls; and perhaps this will help us to find the real Way, the desire of the nations.

Says the Buddha: "Man must sink himself and his petty desires into something greater." Shall we phrase it more familiarly and say: "He must lose his life to save it"?

And Lao-Tse has a splendid word: "Work and serve without striving or crying like the young grass." Shall we say: "Take no anxious thought. Consider the lilies of the field"?

And Confucius, though his contribution is the least spiritual of the three, still shows us the picture of the Noble Man, who refuses to withdraw

from his kind, and rather comes eating and drinking and going about doing good.

In the sixth century before Christ they gave their message; and about the same time a chorus of voices began to cry elsewhere: "The Desire of all nations shall come. . . . All the nations shall be gathered before it. . . . It shall be a praise and honour before all the nations of the earth." And on that chorus let us drop the curtain while the centuries elapse.

v

It rises again on a scene, a mounting, of extraordinary interest. We are shown nothing less than the marching ground of the old empires: the little buffer-country that joined Africa to Asia and Europe; and Egypt to the empires of the plains and hills. Down it, and through it, and over it, and beside it marched and counter-marched the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Chaldeans, the Medes, the Persians, the Greeks and the Romans. It is the very highway of the nations.

And here, on this highway, stepping, as it might be, right across the path of the marchers and the countermarchers, comes a figure, proclaiming that God is the Father of all men; that all men are brothers; that there are no such things

as nations, nor high breeds nor low breeds, nor bond nor free, nor Hebrew nor Greek, nor Jew nor Gentile; that there is but one Kingdom and it is the Kingdom of God; and that in it every man must sink himself in the greater good of his fellows, and must lose his life to save it; and every man must serve without anxiety or worry because he trusts his heavenly Father, and without desire for personal gain because he loves his fellow-man; and that in the kingdom there shall be no pride, nor precedence, for the great shall be the servants of the small, and the strong the ministers of the weak; and there shall be no reprisals, for men shall speak well of those that curse them and pray for those that use them despitefully.

Thus speaks the voice of Him Who steps across the highway. Where His strong-souled predecessors were right, He proclaims afresh their message; but where they were one-sided, He is rounded and whole; where they were local for their own people and transitory for their age, He is universal for all nations and eternal for all times; and, above everything, where they are silent as to God, He is full and satisfying. I have not the least doubt that, once and finally, with that Voice on the highway, the Desire of the Nations came. I have not the least doubt that that voice was the voice of the Son of God.

VI

The Desire of Nations has come. The way to soul-serenity has been found and proclaimed. And yet men still suffer from unquiet souls, and live and die in pain; and the nations march and countermarch. Let us for once in our lives be straight with ourselves and answer why this should be. We know. We know it is because, both as individuals and nations, we give only lip-service to that Voice. We have never fairly faced it, nor traced it to its logical conclusions, for we have never dared to. We have been afraid, knowing in our heart of hearts that it is the most revolutionary voice that ever disturbed human thought. It would have us give up too much—too much. It would have us adventure too great a happiness. No, let us not trace it too far. For then there can be no real property, because all property belongs to the Kingdom and not to the individual, and perhaps that idea leads to Communism, dread thought; or, if not, it leads to the upsetting idea that what we have is not ours, but lent; and that every extra bit we have increases our terrible accountability—oh, let us not think too deeply about it, for we love our sense of proprietorship. There can be no precedence—but, oh! we love our *amour propre*, and our salutations in the public squares, and our

prominent seats in the places of meeting; we love to snub those who forget our dignity. And, hush, there can be no patriotism of the popular sort, no *locus standi* for the "unrepentant Englishman" who would have his country overlord the foreign world; there can be none of that blood-stained patriotism, for there are no frontier lines in the Kingdom, and the only legitimate pride in one's country would be pride that it should lead the world, not in armies and navies and colonies, but in the housing and happiness of its people, and the education of its children. But, oh! we love our patriotism and our imperialism and our navalism—let us not think too deeply; let us call him a fanatic who has dared to think too far.

Wait, another thought. I wonder if there can really be any sport of the kind that shoots the birds whose Father watches them fall to the ground. But, oh, again! let us not think about it; we are a sporting people—let us not try to picture our Lord shooting a bird, for that would be thinking too far; and it is terrifying to think too far. In a word, we daren't think what it means to sink ourselves for the love of others; and so we miss the way to soul-serenity and happiness. You don't want to think it out, do you? Nor do I. Though my head cries out, "It is right, every bit of it right," and my heart

cries out, "It is right, every bit of it right," my will droops and faints; and so does yours; and together we think of the young man who turned away sorrowfully, for he had great possessions. We find an escape by calling Buddha and Lao-Tse and Confucius dreamers and visionaries; but we daren't call Christ that, for deep down in our hearts we believe Him to be God. And, if He be that, how dare we think? Take Him away. Take Him away. Crucify Him. Crucify Him.

IV: AN EXPERIMENT

I

LET us try an experiment. Let us read the story of the man Jesus' temptation as if we were reading it for the first time. Let us imagine we have never seen any of those mediæval pictures of a devil, horned and tailed and leering at Jesus' elbow on a mountain-top. Then, to say, "He was tempted of the devil" will call up no absurd picture of the appearance of a bodily devil, but will mean just the same as when we say, "I was sorely tempted to do it. . . . I had to fight an almost overpowering temptation." The trouble is, you see, that we will confuse the pious crudities of mediæval artists with the revelation itself.

II

The first point is this. There must have been a day when a little circle of friends, some twelve or thirteen of them, had become rather intimate in their heart-to-heart talking, telling deep secrets of the past; and the leader of that little circle began, while the eyes of the others, I'm sure, became wide, luminous, and listening, to unbosom

a story of how *he* had had to fight a powerful temptation. For it is certain that the only person who could have told to the Apostles the story of the temptation was Jesus himself. There was no one else there. And it is only the tempted who can speak of what happened in his soul. It's a pleasing thought. We do not speak of our temptations save to those whom we call, not servants, but very intimate friends.

III

This, I think, was the story he told to his friends. There came down upon him at his baptism an almost frightening consciousness of power. "This is my beloved son." He fully understood then what his power was. And you cannot awake to a consciousness of your power without facing the question, "How am I to use it?" and being tempted to use it for wealth or fame or popularity; or, in more deeply spiritual souls, to use it in ways that are hardly evil but a little less than divine. Jesus was terribly tempted. And he went away into solitude, as we do when we are in the grip of a strong temptation. It is difficult to fight a spiritual contest in company. He went away to look at his life, and to consider on what lines he should build it—as many another keen young man has done.

"There's nothing you can't do, if you be the Son of God—if you be the Son of God. . . . How can I best achieve that to which I know I am called? I must worry it out now at the start. Surely it would be very effective, and there would be nothing wrong in—" You see, it was a temptation to do things for which, no doubt, much could be said, but which the noblest in him seemed to reject. He must be alone to think it out. And he didn't want to eat. We don't want to eat halfway through a spiritual contest. All we want to do is to be left alone, till we know that we are victors, and can say, "That's over. I've won."

IV

And it was a long while before this man won; before he abandoned, one after another, the schemes that appeared tainted with wrong. Forty days, I am inclined to think, is only the Jewish conventional method of saying, "a long, long time"; somewhat as we say, "a month of Sundays." It would take a long time for any of us to get the temptation well under, if we really joined issue with it, instead of trifling with it all through our lives: for it is a temptation that we all suffer from in lower degrees—one that I

certainly suffer from, and every public man has always suffered from—the temptation to win applause by a flashy effect; the temptation to win the popular vote by a lowering of one's highest ideals; more satanic still, the temptation to win a vast public by an appeal to their lower passions, their cupidity or their prurience; in a word, the temptation to play down to the crowd. (The name Bottomley immediately occurs to me in this connection.)

And it was a long while before this young man drove it back. Indeed, it was never thereafter absent from his life. Three words of St. Luke tell us that. "The devil departed from him *for a season.*" It makes Jesus sound quite human like ourselves, doesn't it? But a little imagination could have discovered it without the three words of St. Luke. Surely it was attacking him when the people demanded a sign from heaven. It attacked him severely enough to try his temper, when Peter, after declaring his conviction that he was the Son of God, refused to believe that he would forswear everything, and, if necessary, die. At that moment it was so powerful as to re-create the whole scene in the wilderness, and to make Jesus say, "Get thee behind me—thou savourest of the old trouble, the desire to please men rather than God." And, whenever the disciples, the

only friends he had left, showed that they expected great material gains for being loyal to him, it must have attacked him with a tremendous desire to minister to their cupidity. Certainly its last echo is heard at the end of his life, "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." And he beat it. And he died, saying something like, "That's over. I've won."

V

Often through the long spiritual contest in the wilderness, while the victory was still unwon, the pangs of hunger asserted themselves. And the devil couched low in the pangs. Jesus was tempted to throw up his struggle for a little, and to cut with it all, and to eat. Besides he was alone, and, if he was the Son of God with a miracle-working power, he could turn these stones into loaves, and it would injure nobody. We can understand the feeling. "Ah, well. Let's leave it undecided for a little. Let's go and have something to eat." But Jesus saw that, if the issue remained indecisive while he temporarily withdrew, and if he used the very power that was in question ere he had decided on its use, he would have sustained an initial defeat.

VI

Of course it must have early occurred to him that he could easily endorse all his claims by some such flashy effect as a hurling of himself from the Temple. But probably this crude form of the temptation was quickly beaten. He would see at once that that was not the true way to win the souls of men, even though a passage in Scripture might seem to warrant it. Their faith would then be based on terror, not love. Indeed, it wouldn't be faith at all; it would be just cold, intellectual conviction.

It is the third form of the temptation that is the direst—the mass attack, after mere raids. It runs like this: "If I do a little less than my highest ideals, I can win the popular vote. But, if I pursue uncompromisingly the highest of all; if I preach only perfection, utter self-abnegation, and total surrender, I shall provoke hostility and earn unpopularity for the message of God. But, if I compromise a little with the worldliness of men, I can win all the kingdoms of the world. Would it not be wise? Would not a compromise be good statesmanship? Fancy, all the kingdoms of the world as the empire of God!" But no. The greatest souls of this world have always seen that to pursue a little less than their highest ideals is to worship Satan. To follow the brightest

light that is in them is to worship God. And Him only will they serve.

VII

In conducting this experiment, it may appear that I have spoken of our Lord too much as if he were a common man; and, in answer to this, I would point out that the whole temptation which I have been analysing depends for its point and force on the certainty in Jesus' mind that he was the Son of God, and possessed of a miracle-working power. The story of the Temptation is thus a heavy argument for the divinity of Christ.

VIII

The Russian novelist, Dostoievsky, says: "The Roman Church is Christ yielding to the third temptation." This remarkable sentence expresses the truth, which I firmly believe, that, when Pope Hildebrand dreamed his rather noble dream of the Holy Roman Empire, and yielded to it, he succumbed where his Master conquered. How far our own communion has yielded too, I express no judgment. I desire only to provoke your thought. I think it is fair to say that Mohammed compromised with the sensuality of men, and so

won the Arab kingdoms of the world. And that Napoleon was tempted of the devil on the same lines and fell. And Kaiser Wilhelm—he too was dazzled by that vision of the kingdoms of the world, and called it Mittel-Europa.

But to drop to less imperial figures. We are all of us subject to the lower degrees of this temptation. A mother who tries to win the love of her children by indulgence and spoiling; a schoolmaster who is “out for popularity” at the expense of discipline; an author who bids for a wide public by work that he feels to be false and yet to have a commercial value—sensationalism, or just dirt; a preacher who consciously uses vulgarity and clap-trap to crowd his church: all fail where their Master told them of victory.

And all ultimately fail: the weak mother, the popularity-mongering schoolmaster, the money-making but ephemeral author, the cheap but unspiritual preacher. For God alone, and not Satan, though he gratify you with temporary success, can guide to final victory.

IX

“And, when it was all over, angels came and ministered to him.”

I said just now that there was no visible devil in the Temptation. Perhaps I presumed too far.

Perhaps to greater sanctity than ours, there is given a greater clairvoyance, a power to see the invisible spirits of good and evil; and our Lord *did* see something. But it doesn't matter. All that matters is to understand that the experience was exactly the same as our own. So, likewise, the angels coming and ministering to him was the same experience as we know after temptation, when we rise from our knees, conquerors, saying: "That's over. I've won." We feel an elation and joy; and perhaps—who can say—had we the unsullied eyes of our Lord, we should see at such a moment angels round about us.

V: THE LAW OF TRAVAIL

I

IT seems a law for men and nations that only out of agony shall good things come to birth. It is obviously true of that good thing, a man-child; it can only enter this world through an avenue and gateway of pain. And history shows it strangely true of such good things as Liberty and Equitable Government; they emerge only from the strife and agony of nations. And our private spiritual experience tells us it is not less true of some of our virtues—courage, perseverance, patience, hope, sympathy; they are necessarily born in our pain.

Of all this I speak here because the thought comes packed with consolation. Are you thinking of the troubles that torment your own soul? The thought will lend to that pain a more gracious countenance. Are you thinking of the troubles that rack the state? The thought will teach you, perhaps, not to deplore but to reverence them: it will train your lips to say, "These distresses are not ends but beginnings; they are not death-pangs but birth-throes; and birth-throes are things to honour. Let us wait,

excited with hope, to see what good thing shall be born of this."

And then, when the age shall have been delivered of its child, you will live under that other law, which always attends the Law of Travail—that rainbow law which says: "The sufferers will remember no more the anguish for joy that a man is born into the world."

II

Let us glance at the history of nations. I might speak to you of the French Revolution, and remind you that France, in that prolonged travail, brought forth her gifts at last, so that the whole world thanks her, and dates a new and grander epoch from the close of that noisy night. I might speak to you of the Civil War in America, or the Stuart and Cromwellian wars in England, but I have only time to examine in detail the century-long travail of nations that seems to have been required before the man-child, Jesus of Nazareth, could be born into the world.

It required the martyrdom of the Hebrew Race.

It required their oppression, those sons of Israel, in Egypt, that they might develop an intense race-consciousness; it required their forty years' discipline in the wilderness that they

might issue therefrom a compact and law-bound nation; it required their subjection to the tyranny of the old empires, Syria, Assyria, and Babylon, that they might be thrown more and more upon God, and arrive at length at their idea of Messiah; it required the catastrophe of the destruction of Jerusalem under Nebuchadrezzar that they might be purged and purified, and their religion made a fitter vessel for the germ of the Carpenter's creed. Ah, if only those poor Hebrews, being drawn into exile and thinking that it was the end of all things, could have seen far enough, they would have seen us thanking them for their anguish, and rejoicing that a man-child was born into the world.

But there was another nation brought to bed that Christ might be born. It is certain that the Christ-idea, the Incarnate Logos, could not have won the intellectual world of the ancients, if the Greeks had not carried into the cities of the Mediterranean their mystical and philosophical thought, and their love and pursuit of abstract truth. Christ is encased in Greek thought. That may not be very clear to you who are untrained in metaphysics and theology, but, believe me, it is true: and it gives us the idea that the birth of Christ involved the agony of mind which Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and a thousand others, suffered in their struggle after truth; and, more,

that it involved the bloody battles of Marathon and Salamis which determined that the Persian should go and the Greek should stay. Ah, if only the mourning mothers of Athens could have seen far enough, and known on what business their boys were sent!

And thirdly, the Roman, or Latin, Empire was a necessary foundation for the world-wide church of Christ; and therefore I refuse to consider it straining the idea too far, if I say that, in a sense, every Roman soldier that died on the sands of Africa, or in the snows of the Alps, or in the fields of our own Kent, suffered birth-throes for Christ.

Yes, the birth of Jesus Christ was written in the blood of the Hebrews, the Greeks, and the Latins.

III

So take comfort. These are heroic days, and I for one am proud to be alive in them. England, having spilt her blood the world over, is now being tormented internally, as are all her sisters of Europe, but something good is struggling to the birth. You may see it, or you may not, but never mind; only identify yourself with the purpose of God, and then you will be happily sure that some one, somewhere, somewhen will remember not the anguish for joy that Man,

better and nobler, is born into the world. I am certain, whatever cynics may say about man being as bloodthirsty a savage as ever, that, on the contrary, he is ever being born again, through trouble after trouble, world-agony after world-agony; and each time he emerges a loftier creature. In this sense, "Blessed is the illness of nations for it goes to the making of Man."

IV

But some of you have your own personal trouble and can spare but little time for considering the corporate sickness. Well, the Law of Travail has its comfort for you. Let me ask you: is it not true that heroism can only come through the door of pain? If you can brace yourself to say: "Here is trouble, but I am not going to be beaten to the ground by it; I shall remain standing; I may flinch and shudder, but it shall never force me to my knee"; then, though scoffers may call these "heroics," you will emerge from the ordeal a man of greater courage, stronger will-power, and stouter resistance; and, as the revelation of these newly acquired qualities breaks upon you, you will remember no more the anguish for joy that a hero is born into the world.

And may I give you another idea, that perhaps will appeal to many of you, as it certainly does

to me? All of you are artists in a greater or less degree—that is, you love music or painting or poetry or sculpture. Some of you are ambitious visionaries and hope to excel in one of these arts; others of you desire no more than to understand and appreciate them, and to drink your fill of their pleasures. Now, all great art—be it great music or great poetry or great painting—is two things: it is the outward medium (wood- and brass- and string-sounds in music; words in poetry; colours in painting), and it is the inward thing, the emotional content. The emotional content is produced out of the artist's experience of courage, hope, aspiration, renunciation—all of which, one minute's reflection will show you, are born of pain. Therefore it follows that not until you have known pain can you have anything but an academic idea of these emotions, the stuff of art. Not until you have known the threat of pain can you have anything but a guess-work idea of what courage is; not until you have known the grip of pain can you have anything but a guess-work idea of what hope is. So it is out of pain that the artist is born, whether it is the greater artist who creates beauty from the depths of his experience, or the lesser artist who responds to that beauty with all his nature.

V

There is one other little thought lurking in my mind as I contemplate the Law of Travail; and it seems to demand expression, though I hardly know whether it is worth bringing to your view. It is the travail of the Christian priest that his message may somewhere come to birth. Will you at times consider the mental struggle and strain through which your priests pass when they wonder how best to say God's word; how to avoid begging God's question; how not to spoil His case by poor advocacy; how not to vitiate His simple message with over-elaboration or vulgar rhetoric; and how, now and then, to medicine to morbid souls? It is a very great spiritual strain; and you must think only with gentleness of those in whom it sometimes (though so comparatively seldom) produces total spiritual collapse. You see, we travail and travail, and very rarely do we see any fruit of our labours. Only sometimes, here and there, as if to keep us going a little longer, God vouchsafes us an example of a soul uplifted by our spoken word. Then it is we remember no more the anguish for joy that a man is born into the world.

VI: GOD MEETING THE SOUL

I

IT is the gift of the poet to be able to compress into the smallest compass of words—and those words preferably the tiniest and simplest of monosyllables—a thought of immeasurable depth. And I suppose the sublimity of the poet's resulting line or stanza—its jewel-like character—will largely depend on its very smallness and the intense compression of the meaning. The fewer the words and the smaller their size, the more wonderful will be the triumph of the verse as it is finally turned and polished and presented to us. I know no better illustration of this highly compressed art than a single stanza of Alice Meynell. Do you know it? It's just this. Taking our Lord's words, "I am the way," she writes these four lines:

*"Thou art the Way;
Hadst thou been nothing but the goal,
I cannot say
If thou hadst ever met my soul."*

II

And in that little verse lies the whole argument for the coming of Christ. We are all agreed that God is our ultimate goal, but how are we to reach that goal, unless some one come from there to meet us. It is not enough that somebody of our own world, greater-souled than ourselves, should go in front and lead us, for though such a person might lead us quite a long way, he must inevitably lose us, sooner or later, in the Impenetrable. No, some one must come from over there, to whom nothing is impenetrable; and the greatest of all great thoughts would be if that Someone were God Himself. And why not? Why should God be content to be nothing but the goal?

Personally, I do not see that there is any choice between God the Unknowable, and the God who sent Jesus Christ to meet the soul. Choose for yourselves which is the more reasonable and likely. I have long ago chosen. Often I have argued it to myself like this:

The God whose mind is so obviously at work in the organisation of this mathematically ordered universe seems very practical. There's something very practical about the way the rain is sent to water the ground, and the sun to ripen the corn; or the way the passage of the earth

about the sun produces the seasons, so that there is variety in our lives, the absence of which would make for deadness, monotony and melancholy; or the earth's habit of spinning on its axis, which gives us day and night, a time for work and a time for recuperation. There's something so practical about it all that I find it impossible to think that the greatest and noblest need of which we are conscious, soul-hunger, has been left uncatered for by God. If He remains unknowable to the soul, this God who has done all other things well breaks down at the point that matters most. There *must* be a revelation. There must be something sent for the soul, equivalent to the sun and the rain for the seed of the earth. There must be something of consolation and comfort for the pain in the world—else is God more heartless than the poorest human parent, which is unthinkable: and that something *must* be Christ.

It is Christ or nothing. There is no other factor in history that enters into the remotest competition with Christ; there is no other figure whom we can contemplate for a moment as a possible alternative. That kindly old sensualist, Mohammed; that high-souled but visionary Gautama Buddha; that suave teacher of ceremonial and courtesy, Confucius—none of these can find chamber-room in our western souls. Nor, observe, do any of them claim either with their

own voice or the voice of their followers to be God, meeting the soul. They only claim to be men like ourselves, with a clearer vision of how to struggle on in the rather hopeless task of finding peace and a rest. Christ is the only figure who ever dared claim to be God meeting the soul. Listen:

“No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him;”

“Philip saith, Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith, Have I been so long with you, and hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”

“No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and He to whom the Son will reveal him;”

“No man cometh to the Father but by me;”
“I am the way.”

Yes,

*“Thou art the Way;
Hadst thou been nothing but the goal,
I cannot say
If thou hadst ever met my soul.”*

III

I want to make it quite clear that, if Christ be God meeting the soul, then there is a solution

of mystery, and satisfaction and rest: and, if He be not, then there is nothing but everlasting doubt, repulse, dissatisfaction, and hunger. So that it is easier to believe that God did send Christ than that He didn't.

For (follow me carefully) if we are to establish any relation between ourselves and God, it is certain that that relation must be one of love for Him, and understanding of His character and requirements.

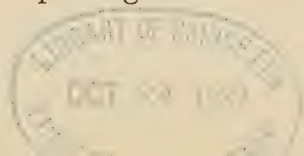
We'll take first the question of our loving God. We know that, however feeble and unsatisfactory we may be, our power of love is the most uplifting and purifying faculty in us. We feel nobler when we are loving some one than at any other time; and in the light of love all things that are little and paltry and shady die away. So we can have no doubt that in our relation with God this noblest faculty ought to play. But how on earth are we to love God without Christ? We can't love an unknowable God. We can't love an abstract conception—a sort of etherealised amalgam of infinities. We can't close upon it to love it. You must be able to embrace with your mind what you love. "Hadst thou been nothing but the goal, my soul had never closed upon thee." No, our frail minds need a man to love, a human being, a some one whom we can picture, a creature of emotions (for, if one thing is more

certain than another, it is that we can only love a creature of emotions). Now, if Christ be the answer to this difficulty, at once love can play. In Christ God seems to say: "If you can't understand me, this is my beloved son, hear him. He shall tell you of me. He is the Infinite God given the outline and colour and warmth of a human being: God made visible, tangible, conceivable. He is God expressed in terms that you can understand. In terms of man—if God were man, this is what he would be like—nay, now God is man, and this is what he is like. Only love him whom I have sent, and you shall love me in him."

Oh, it must be true! The idea of God being incarnated for us is so beautiful that it must be true. There *are* some things so beautiful that it is inconceivable that they are not true. Can man have thought a more beautiful thought than God? I don't know how far this argument is valid with you, but it is extraordinarily valid with me; and must surely be so with all those who hold the faith of Keats:

*"Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty. That is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."*

And the idea is so final that it must be true. It is impossible to think of man ever improving on



the idea of God coming as a man to meet man's soul. Here he has reached the topmost pinnacle of beauty of thought. Just try for a moment to think of any improvement in the simple idea that God came as a man to meet man's soul. You will see that it is the final idea. It's the final idea that man can compass; and I believe that it's the final message of God.

IV

We see, then, that love of God is only rendered possible by Christ coming out of the Impenetrable, dwindling as he comes, till he is of a size for us to comprehend him, and finally incarnating God for us. But, besides love, we agreed that there must be understanding of God's character and requirements. What, for instance, is his attitude towards sin and repentance? What is his mercy? What is his justice? Without Christ there is no answer, and never will be any answer, to these questions. But with Christ God answers them—not with a code of laws or a tabulated system of punishments and rewards, but, just as *we* do when we try to make an idea clear to little children—with a story, where he just shows us what God would do if he walked about as a man. That's what the Gospel story means. Whatsoever relation justice bears to

mercy in the character of Christ is the relation it bears in the character of God. The sins that make Christ angry are the sins that anger God. The attitudes of soul that draw the compassion of Christ are the attitudes that stir the pity of God; and it is good to remember that to all people in pain, seemingly without regard to their goodness, he is very tender indeed.

What, then, do you seek to know of God's character? His dealing with your sins? Look at Christ and study his attitude towards sinners. Only turn from them toward God, and, while you are yet a terrible way off, he will run like a father to meet you. It's the old story, on which the whole of this chapter is based, that God is not content to be the goal, but comes to meet the soul. Ah, yes, but what about dreadful sin, flagrant violations of God's law? Look at Christ again with the robber, the adulteress, and the profiteer Zaccheus. "Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more." "Thou shalt be with me." "I will sup with thee." Is there nothing, then, that God is angry with? Oh, yes, He, since Christ interprets Him, can be very angry with all hypocrisy and humbug and cant, and with all lovelessness that leaves the beggar at the gate, the hungry without food, the naked unclothed, and the sick unvisited; and with any one who causes a little child to stumble.

V

You see, then, how the argument runs.

We must choose either God the Unknowable, or the God who sent a revelation. That God should remain unknowable, we can't think, as it would make him more heartless than a human parent, and would be inconsistent with the evidence of his bounty and practicalness in nature. If He has sent a revelation, it is surely Christ, for there is none else; and, when we come to think it out, Christ is the form we should expect the revelation to take. If there must be a mediator, to be perfect (and God only deals in perfections) he must be both God and Man. Accepting Christ, we find that we have, first, a God whom we can picture and love, and, secondly, an acted answer to every question that we can ask as to the character of our God. Wonderful! Wonderful! The Word was made flesh that it might be intelligible and dwelt among us. Thank God for it; for

"Had He been nothing but the goal....

I cannot say

If He had ever met the soul."

VII: THE GODWARD THRUST

HAVING dealt with God meeting the soul, I propose to consider now what I shall call, "the upward reach of earth to God"; or, better still, if we may coin our own phrase, "the Godward thrust of earth."

And in the arguments that follow understand that I have in mind the attack of the apostles of Evolution and Materialism upon the divinity of Christ. I seek to show that, if their whole system of purely material evolution were proven true, it would only, to my thinking, increase the certainty of Christ, and deepen and beautify the mystery of the Gospel: whereof let us now speak boldly, as we ought to speak.

In order, then, to carry the war into the enemy's country, and to defeat their conclusions by drawing our own conclusions from their arguments, let us assume as true their whole position: namely, that, though there is a God, He is remote from earth; that our earth is a spontaneous generation, and has, of its own power, by means of some thrusting force within itself, after ages of travail and labour and evolution, from the moment when it was flung as a flaming mass from

the sun, reached its present state of highly complicated life.

Granted that this is so: then you and I are earth—eruptions of earth. So indeed we are. I want you to get very clearly into your minds the idea of your unity with earth. You and I and the walls about you and the seat on which you are sitting are eruptions of earth. Everything that you can see at this moment is a manifestation of earth. You say, "This is nothing new. I know all about that. 'Dust I am, and to dust shall I return.' " No, it's nothing new that you should *know* it. What would be new would be if you could *feel* it. There's a difference between knowing an idea for a truth, and feeling it for a truth. And, if I am to succeed in leaving with you the tremendous conception of what I have called "the Godward thrust of earth," it is of first importance that you really feel intensely your identity in composition with the stuff of trees and grass and chalk and lime and ponds and seas.

Perhaps, in order to bring home to you that feeling, I may be allowed to tell you how once, and for the first time, it seemed to burst upon me as a spiritual experience.

I was lying idly on a Cornish headland, looking out to sea. Round about me was the thick, crisp heather; and, here and there, large dense

patches of bracken which now and then stirred, as a rabbit scurried beneath the fronds. Gradually, to the exclusion of other sounds, I became conscious, as one becomes conscious of the ticking of a clock, of the unceasing murmur of the sea, as it came billowing towards the land; and the monotonous noise of its eternal repulse on the beach below. It was that moment that there came down upon me a sense (and it was a thrilling sense) of my kinship with earth and the waters. I seemed to know suddenly that the bracken, the heather, and the sea were the same stuff as myself; that the eternal, unconscious, unwilling beating of the sea was a more elementary form of the monotonous, unwilling beating of my heart; and that the rhythmic motion of the waters was the rhythmic motion of the blood in my veins. I felt completely one with earth: the throb of my heart, and the pulse of my blood seemed one with the beat of the sea; and all the texture of my body the stuff of restless earth: more still, the very mental fabric with which I was thinking these thoughts was only a livelier version of the moving bracken and the beating sea.

Now, will you strive also for one minute to feel that you are the product of some spontaneous urge in Earth which has forced it to express itself as you. Get the meaning of that sentence.

Earth, after ages and ages of thrusting, has expressed itself, among other ways, as you. Hold on to that idea for a moment—don't lose it, or you will lose the glorious idea that we are going to draw from it.

The earth, as its final achievement, has expressed itself as you. And you are two things: you are conscious, and you are articulate. Now, do you not seem to see the earth struggling through æons and æons of time to become conscious—to produce for itself a mind, wherein it could become conscious; and, having found consciousness, to find a voice? Do you mark the long, tameless plan of earth; the plan that has stirred and fretted it through the countless ages of evolution; the plan to swell to consciousness and voice at last? And the driving force, the thrusting force, that has at last achieved its end, is what I have a fancy to call "the Godward thrust." At last this pent-up, surging *thought* has built its birthplace in the mind of man. When man became conscious, earth became conscious too; and was so far nearer the fulfilment of that duty, as yet nameless, for which it had been thrusting towards consciousness. One is tempted to imagine a given moment when man, and with him the earth, first awoke to the possession of his consciousness. Let us for a moment leave it in that

possession, and consider its struggle to find a voice.

There seems something like an abortive effort to find articulate voice in the song of the birds, the bark of the dog, and the roar of the lion. But manifestly its finest consciousness will shape for it its finest voice; and so it is through the lips of man that finally the earth becomes articulate. But why should it want to become articulate? Why should it want to make a machine for shaping and twisting the outer air into sounds or words? Is it this Godward thrust, the eternal swell of it, the refusal of it to be imprisoned or inarticulate? First, thought had shaped a consciousness for itself in the mind of man; and, after that, a means of escape in the voice of man; and thus it escapes along the wind.

Clearer and clearer there brightens before us the majestic idea that the earth has been struggling through all its ages to express something; and I am going to suggest that the only possible thing it can be striving to express is worship. Wherever we find man in the lowest forms of consciousness, we find him struggling to express the worship of God. There is in him an urge of which he is unconscious, and it is the Godward thrust. The thrust has achieved its purpose. Through man's lips it has wrought an

upward shaft for issuing to God. And, before we leave this idea, remember that you are man. You are thus (with your kind) the sole spokesman for earth, the sole means of sounding its voice beyond the sky. Then fail it not. Vent for earth its age-long, bursting cry: "To God, my builder, praise."

And I wonder, as I sweep through these remote and rarefied thoughts, striving to find a safe alighting place, whether Christ is not the crowning triumph of the Godward thrust of earth, the perfect consummation, the supreme spokesman. We are accustomed to hear Him referred to as the gift and message of God to earth. I am wondering now if He is not the crowning gift and message of earth to God.

VIII: A NEW YEAR'S MOTTO

I

THERE'S no doubt, I suppose, that the best-beloved of all the stories told by our Lord is the story of the Prodigal Son. And not simply because its hero is one of the most popular types in fiction, the young man who goes wrong, and then makes good; nor because the story of a father's love and unqualified forgiveness is always sure of a great public, but because it is so full in the telling of little human touches and gracious phrases. There is of course the matchless sentence, on which I have often dwelt: "And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him"; wherein lies the certainty that his father had been waiting and watching with undiminished faith that his boy's better nature would one day bring him over the sky-line. He must have strained his eyes at that figure a long way off! One is irresistibly reminded of Mr. Peggotty. "Little Emily will come again; and, if you meet her, and she hesitates to return, tell her my unchanged love is with my darling child, and I forgive her." There is the sentence: "He *ran* to meet him." Let me not profane with another word the heart-breaking picture of the old man running. There

is the remarkable refusal of the father to listen to the son's self-blame. Have you ever noticed it? The son says: "Oh, father, I've been as bad as possible. I've insulted God, I think, and hurt you; and I reckon I'm simply not fit to be a son of yours. Well, I'm ready to eat my humble pie. Make me a servant, if you like." And the father doesn't even answer him. Not only is there no word of reproach, but there are no such uncomfortable remarks as: "Say no more about it. . . . We'll try to forget. . . . We're none of us perfect." He only turns round to the servants and says: "Bring out the best clothes we've got, and put them on him, and put my ring on his finger, and kill the finest calf we've got."

But I think the most beautiful of these touches is one that has probably never struck you at all. I am going to make out of it a New Year's motto. It is the sentence in which our Lord describes the young man's recovery—his turning from what is bad to what is good—with the words: "And when he came to himself—"

II

"Came to himself." Think what our Lord's choice of those words to describe repentance means. It means that we are told from the lips

of the Great Authority that our real selves are good; and that we are only our real selves when we are at our best. To be good is simply to be ourselves.

In the face of this sentence of our Lord's, all of us can say with perfect truth: "I am good. All my dreadful sin is just my failure to be myself. It's just error." Error is the perfect word, for it means a wandering away. My sin is just error; it's all a mistake, a blundering, a misplaying of a tune that is in itself beautiful, because God wrote it.

Let us grip the idea. Jesus looks upon the greatest sinner of us all, and sees that he is good. The sentence that tells how God, after creating the world, overlooked his handiwork and saw that it was good and the sentence in which our Lord says, "And when he came to himself," are much the same, for they reveal the same character.

III

New Year's Day. It is a time for unbounded faith and hope. Take them from your Lord's lips. You yourself are good, and all you have to do is to come to yourself.

Haven't you felt the truth of it sometimes, the truth of your essential goodness, if only you could get quit of your mistakes? Perhaps you have

felt it some rare day of early summer, when you have been alone among the trees on a carpet of bluebells, and have let your eyes wander to the hedgerows white with may or massed with lilac. There has been a great silence—a silence that strikes like a blow—and then gradually you learn that it is not silence at all, for, though you have only just noticed it, there have been birds singing in the distance all the time. You are right away from the world and such things as covetousness and jealousy and hatred: you are just yourself; and, tell me truthfully, do you feel anything but good?

IV

Here's your New Year motto, then: "Come to yourself, for your self is good and beautiful and true." Don't mind making a New Year's resolution. Have your joke about it by all means—we do love our annual joke about New Year resolutions—but make the resolution just the same. Of all the wicked old lies that have done harm in the world, one of the wickedest is that which says: "The way to hell is paved with good resolutions." No, the proverb should run: "The way to heaven is paved with broken ones." For, if you persist right up to the end in making them, you may stumble and backslide a good deal, but you'll get there in the morning.

Come to yourself, then, for your self is good and beautiful and true. And the first thing that will happen after you come to yourself will be that you will begin to arise to something higher. When our young hero came to himself he said, "I will arise." And the next thing that you will notice will be that you will begin to live. Whereas, before, you were sated and wearied with the husks of life, and drifting and lost, now you will be full of vigorous life, the blood coursing merrily in your veins. "For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

And don't hesitate about coming to yourself because you think: "Well, even if I do turn again, I can never hope to be the man I might have been, if I had never sinned. I have wasted my strength, and injured my will, and fouled my imagination. I can only be at best a poor edition of what I might have been." Don't believe it. There's nothing that you cannot hope to be. Remember the son in our story thought that he could never hope to be a son again, but must ever be only a hired servant. But his father refused to listen to him and said: "Bring hither the best robe and put it on him, and put shoes on his feet, and a ring on his finger. There is nothing of which he is not worthy and nothing of which he is not capable."

IX: HE THAT SHOULD COME

I

JOHN the Baptist in a moment of hesitating faith asked our Lord to show his credentials. And that's what half-doubting critics have been doing ever since. "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"

"He that should come." Why should we expect that anybody should come from God to us? What reason is there for supposing that God must make some revelation to men. Why, if we were to decide that Jesus was not he that should come, should we feel entitled to look for another?

Well, there are many reasons why; and perhaps we saw the best one, when we were discussing the necessity of God meeting the soul. It lies in the thoughts that you are thinking now, in your desire for knowledge of God, in the way your intellect at this moment is playing round the figure of Christ. The fact that Man blunderingly cries out for and aspires towards God is the greatest argument that God must send something in answer. If we believe that God is love (and everything must start from that), then we cannot conceive of Him leaving us to our sin and our pain,

and turning a heartless, deaf ear on our aspirations. Even an earthly father could not see his child sick and crying to him without providing a remedy. He could not see his boy drowning and calling for help, without stretching an arm to his assistance.

II

Well, then, O Christ, art *thou* he that should come, or do we look for another? That's the case we're going to try. We are going to examine Christ's claim to be he that should come.

We have treated it along some lines already. Now we will marshal a new battalion of arguments. We'll wander up and down history, recruiting.

And the first thing to notice is the phenomenon in history that there has always been one nation perfectly persuaded that it should be privileged to bring him that should come into the world. We are fond in these days of talking about race-consciousness to match the race-consciousness of the Hebrews. Shall we sift their extraordinary idea?

In their folk-lore we find the ideá glimmering in the legend of the Garden of Eden, where they would have us believe that God said that the seed of woman should bruise the serpent's head. This

is very vague, and our evidence would indeed be thin if we had to build much on this; but it at least makes the point that the entrance of sin and pain into the world means inevitably the entrance of a gospel.

Next, ages after, the idea glimmers again in the breast of a man whom we see crossing an Eastern river, with his wife and his camels and his asses, and a considerable following of people. He may be deluded, or he may not, but he is making this move because he is convinced that he must cut with the idolatry and polytheism of his own people, and venture into a new land, where he will establish a nation that will worship God on different lines, and be entrusted to bring to the world some wonderful blessing. Abraham, of course, who, though childless, and "as good as dead," had become possessed, somewhere in the quiet of the Arabian desert, with the idea that in his seed, generations hence, all the nations of the world should be somehow blest. And, because he had the courage to cross the river Euphrates with his idea under his arm, so to speak, he became the first great Pilgrim Father. He ventured into the Blue for the sake of his idea and became the father of the great monotheistic religions of the world, Judaism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism.

This old sheik had two sons, Isaac and Ishmael;

and Ishmael was cast out and became the father of the Ishmaelites. Isaac, the favoured son, stayed at home, and became the inheritor of the great idea. I am not concerned with the rival claims of Isaac and Ishmael. I only want you to notice the extraordinary vitalising power of the great tradition handed from Abraham to Isaac, and from Isaac to his descendants. The Ishmaelites, where are they now? But the children of Isaac, where are they not?

Isaac had two sons, Esau and Jacob, of whom Esau was cast out and became the father of the Edomites. Once again, I am not concerned with the quarrel between Esau and Jacob. The folklore of the Hebrews is naturally very one-sided and pro-Jacob; but I only want you to notice again the vitalising power of the great tradition. Where are the Edomites to-day?

Jacob had twelve sons, who became the twelve tribes: and now we have to pass over hundreds of years to find out which of them was to inherit the great tradition. We have to pass over the oppression in Egypt, the wandering in the wilderness, the ups and downs of their history in Canaan, until we come to the sudden destruction and disappearance of all the tribes, save one—Judah. Once more, the eleven tribes, where are they now? They are become the lost sheep of the House of Israel, and certain amusing societies

are still looking for them. But the men of Judah, or Jews, who so marked as they?

With the selection of Judah, a change comes over the great idea. It is no longer a vague, indefinite promise of some blessing for the world. It has ceased to be vapoury and has solidified into the form of a *man*. Men speak of "the Lion of Judah," "Messiah," "Him that should come."

Our next step in studying the path of the great idea, which we may now call the Messianic Hope, is to get a rough picture of the political condition of the state of Judah. Modern criticism has thrown a revealing light on this. We may say that Judah was torn between three conflicting political parties, who loved Judah and the great idea, as much as they disliked one another. There was the Priestly party, which later became all-powerful. These people conceived of the theocratic state of Judah chiefly as a church, with a highly elaborated system of sacrifices, altars, and victims. They proclaimed that Messiah should be a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

The second party to notice was the Nationalist, Imperialist, or Militarist party—the Jingo, if you like—who wanted to colour the map red with Judaic conquest and rebuild the old empire of David and Solomon. They were all out for ter-

ritorial aggrandisement and proclaimed that Messiah should be a warrior king.

The third party was the great Prophetical party, with its roots in Elijah and the schools of the prophets. These were the idealist, visionary, unpopular party; but it is remarkable that their wonderful succession of party-leaders—Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah—were among the glories of the ancient world. The Prophetical party was anti-priestly and anti-nationalist. They hated all materialism—whether it was the materialism and formalism of the Priestly party, or the materialism and ambition for territorial aggrandisement of the National party. In religion, may I say, they were the Quakers of the day; in foreign policy, the little Englanders. To the Priestly party they cried: “God does not need the sacrifice of bulls and goats, when his are the cattle on a thousand hills. He will have mercy, not sacrifice.” To the Nationalist and Militarist party they cried: “Why are you flirting with Assyria, or trusting in Egypt, that broken reed? Your traffic should be in spiritual things: and Israel is greatest when smallest.” Jeremiah is typical of them; and nothing can disguise the fact that he was a conscientious objector in the fine fight which the little nation of Judah put up against the hordes of Nebuchadrezzar. The prophetical message is always too rarefied for its

age. The prophets, of course, believed that Messiah would be a prophet like themselves.

So there you have the reasons why he that should come was foretold as prophet, priest, and king.

But at least twice the idea of Messiah seemed to flare up to Heaven till it was high above all local party jealousies. Once was when Isaiah reached the dazzling thought that the coming of Messiah would be some kind of catastrophic appearance of Jehovah himself. "A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. . . . Unto us a child is born, and his name shall be called Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." And the other was when, in a flash of genius, the Deutero-Isaiah saw that Messiah, like all too great souls, must suffer and serve and be rejected, "bruised for our iniquities, wounded for our transgressions, by whose stripes we are healed."

Prophet, priest, king, Jehovah himself, suffering servant—O Jesus, art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?

Prophet? Thou wast in the direct succession of the prophets, thy voice ringing with their old Woes and Blessings, and proclaiming mercy before sacrifice. Priest? With a touch of thy hand thou didst spiritualise the whole priestly system, fulfilling its every idea, by becoming

thyself the priest and victim at the altar of atonement. King? Who of the boldest of the Hebrew nationalists ever foresaw the world-wide empire that thou claimest? Jehovah himself? What other figure in history ever dared to make thy claims? Suffering servant? The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be spat upon, and crucified. . . . It is done.

III

But all this argument is taken from Biblical history. We must now look at world history.

It has often been pointed out that, at the moment of the birth of Jesus, the stage of the world seemed set for some great central event.

The Romans had conquered the known world and reduced it to order: their roads were laid and made, and, radiating from Rome, were ready for the feet of the messengers. The *pax Romana* brooded over the earth. As Milton says:

"No war or battle's sound

Was heard the world around;

The idle spear and shield were high up hung:

The hookèd chariot stood

Unstained with hostile blood;

The trumpet spake not to the armèd throng:

*And kings sat still with awful eye
As if they surely knew their sovereign lord
was by."*

Then the culture of the Greeks had spread over the Roman Empire; and the Greek colonists had taken with them their language, which became a sort of universal language, and was destined to be the vehicle in which the good news should be brought to the world. Also they had familiarised the great centres of learning with their Hellenistic philosophy, which later so illumined the gospel.

Lastly, the Jews of the Dispersion, as they were called, had been scattered over the world that they might lay in every city that foundation of Judaism, on which alone Christianity can be built.

Everything was ready. It was as though the hour had struck, and the heavens parted, and Gabriel, spreading his wings, sank to earth at the feet of the maid of Nazareth. O child of that annunciation, art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?

IV

But, when all is said and done, it is strange that our Lord, apparently, prefers not to present

these overwhelming facts as his credentials. When John asked him: "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" he sent back the message: "The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them: and blessed is he who shall not be offended in me."

In other words, to those who accept the gospel, it works. And that seems the credential on which our Lord would take his stand. It works. Those who were blind to spiritual things suddenly receive their sight; those who were but lame, halting souls march like heroes; those who were hideous with the leprosy of sin become white as little children; those who were dead in their sorrow are raised to hope and life again. It works. It is the one solace, the one remedy, the one hope. You agnostic, look at that dying man in yonder hospital bed, with his wife and children weeping around. Take the message of your absentee God to these people. Hurry up, man, the time is short. What? No message of any sort? No solace? No hope? Then, in God's name, stand on one side, and let me take them Christ. Christ works.

Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus left the answer to John. And every soul that comes into the world has to

decide on his answer. If Christ *was* he that should come, the issues for you and for me are enormous. To say the least, it is important business for us. *Was* he he that should come? Let no man lightly answer, "No." Meanwhile the church throughout the world exists to proclaim the answer, "Yes."

X: CHRIST, THE YOUNG AND HAPPY

I

THERE is a continent of unsearchable riches which we call Christ; and it is the province of the Church to be for ever discovering and opening up fresh tracts of wealth-producing territory in that continent, and pouring out its new wealth for the enrichment, the healing, and the beautifying of the world. Now, there are many old rich veins which have been working since the beginning, and will continue to pour out their inexhaustible treasures till the end. Such a one is the old vein of Christ as a man of pain. What wealth of consolation that thought of Christ as a man of pain has meant to the sorrowing portion of the world, it is impossible to measure. I would go so far as to say that the appeal of Christ in the universal language of suffering is well-nigh irresistible.

*"Well I know thy trouble,
O my servant true;
Thou art very weary;
I was weary too."*

But that rich vein, I say, is already working, and working well. I don't propose to talk about it now.

Rather, I would submit that it may be the province of our generation to discover a new tract of wealth-producing territory in the continent which is Christ, and to open up a new vein of riches for the thought of the world.

This new vein is—not the pain of Christ—but the youth, the great physical strength, the glowing health, and the unconquerable happiness of Christ.

I believe it to be necessary to open up that vein of thought right away, because the conventional picture which we have in our minds of Christ is so inadequate. It satisfies the sad; it satisfies the old and tired (and well it is that it should be so, and that there is such a sure message for those who have earned the right to be old and tired: "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest")—yes, it satisfies the sad and old, but—here's the point—the world, as a whole, is, I am convinced, a thing unconquerably young and possessed of an unconquerable will to be happy. I am sure that we are all of us more often happy than miserable; only we hardly notice the long times when we are happy, because they fly along so merrily; whereas the shorter periods of pain

are heavily marked. For my own part, I am satisfied that I have had ten times more fun out of life than misery; and if so be there's a lot of trouble in store for me, well, it's got a big distance to catch up. I wouldn't gamble much on its chances of overtaking the joy of life.

So it seems to me that the conventional picture of Christ—the Christ with a face set in sorrow, and lined and heavily bearded, and striking our children as middle-aged or even very old—fails the world.

Now, that sounds a blasphemy, but it is not so; because, remember, the painted portrait of Christ is no part of the Christian revelation. It might have pleased God to use men's artistry with the paint-brush and the pencil to give us a revelation of His Christ, but he has chosen to use only their spoken and written word.

May I lead you along some new lines of thought that appear to bring us to a very different picture of Christ?

To begin with: it is sin that has produced in men's bodies ugliness and deformation and weakness, so that it is impossible to imagine what the flawless man, the original type in the mind of God, which we may style *Adam*, was like: at any rate, God saw that it was good, and that must mean that it was pretty perfect. But, if Christ came into the world as the second illustration of

God's mind—the second *Adam*, inheriting no ante-natal sin, and being marred by no post-natal sin—he must have brought into the world the natural beauty of unspoiled man. I suggest that the sublimest example of Greek statuary, representing young manhood, falls short of the exquisite proportions of Christ's manly figure.

Then again: Christ was always young. He never knew what it was to leave the period of youth. He died young, and the manhood which he took up to the right hand of the Father was set eternally young. Now, the physical glory of youth is its great bodily strength and its glowing health; and the mental glory of youth is certainly its unconquerable will to be happy. I therefore submit to you Christ as of glorious physical strength, and of an unconquerable will to be happy. I see him as a big man and brown; ruddy with the open air and the Eastern sun; his face lit with laughter and the glow of those who believe in life.

Unfortunately, I have no time now to show you, as I could, how the written word bears all this out: I have no time to give you examples of Christ's rippling humour, and the extraordinary vigour of his utterance and deeds.

Just let me give you two points which will at least bring home to you how one-sided has hitherto been our imagining of Christ. First, when He

left the scene of the last supper and walked towards the garden of Gethsemane, I know that he said: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful"—I know all that—but just think of a text that occurs a few verses before: "And, when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives." Do you know what that hymn was? It was almost certainly the psalm of the Great Hallel, which, in those days, concluded the Pass-over; and it closed on the 118th psalm. Here, then, are a few verses from the last song of Christ:

*"Oh, give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good:
For his mercy endureth for ever. . . .*

*The Lord is on my side; I will not fear
What can man do unto me? . . .*

*The Lord is my strength and song;
And he is become my salvation. . . .*

*I shall not die, but live,
And declare the works of the Lord. . . .*

*Open to me the gates of righteousness:
I will go into them, I will give thanks unto
the Lord. . . .*

*This is the day which the Lord hath made:
We will rejoice and be glad in it. . . .*

*Oh, give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good:
For his mercy endureth for ever."*

Have you ever thought of it before that Christ went to his agony, singing?

The other idea that occurs to me arises from Christ's self-chosen title, Son of Man. By "Man" he means us. Christ calls himself our son: and, in that sense, He is younger than we: and we follow our young son, who leads us to our salvation, singing.

II

Having drawn for ourselves this picture of "Christ, the young and happy," I think the best text that we can write below the picture, to express the essence of it all, will be the words:

*"Thy statutes have been my songs in the house
of my pilgrimage,"*

because, if the "house of my pilgrimage" means the body, what better motto can we have to describe Christ, or any other well-ordered and happy youth? It's the word "songs" that appeals to me. For see, if the pilgrims sing on their march, it swings the miles merrily behind them; it is a sure sign that they know their way, for

men don't sing if they're confused; and it encourages the others, helping to bring the lame and broken-winded home.

So, according to this new conception, if you are old and tired or in any way weary and worn, you may come to Christ and draw from him his youth and his happiness. And I am not speaking in metaphor; for I would have you literally rejuvenated, and filled with the unconquerable will to be happy.

And this thought can be carried further. If those interpreters are right, who think that the words "house of my pilgrimage" are a reference to the body, in which we tabernacle during our journey through the world, may it not suggest to us that our bodies can be filled with Christ, the young and happy, so that they sing with physical health, the heart beating rhythmically and the nerves bracing themselves up like well-tuned strings. Christ in us should mean physical health. That's a cheering thought; and, in these days of psychotherapeutics, it should not be difficult to hold.

I offer you, then, Christ as certainly the true fount of happiness, and probably a sure fount of physical health. And I believe that only by taking him into the body of your pilgrimage will you ensure that you come into harbour, singing.

XI: REVELATION THROUGH LOVE

I

IN spite of all we are told, we *will* go on interpreting the question: "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" as: "What shall I do down here in this world, that, after my death, I may live for ever up above the bright blue sky?" Try as we will, we find it almost impossible to throw off our childhood's idea of eternal life as something that begins beyond the grave. But, if we give *eternal life* the definition Christ gave it: "This is eternal life, to know God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent"; if we remember that eternal life begins here and now—from the moment we begin to be spiritualised by unity with God through Christ—and that the grave is of no more importance to it than our bed will be to-night; if we understand that eternal life is a thing in the houses on the Old Kent Road or on the Brighton Front, and that some of us are already eternally alive and some of us are not; we shall find this question: "What shall I do to become eternally alive?" and the answer: "Thou

shalt love . . . for eternal life is to know Christ," illuminated with a flood of new thinking.

Eternal life can be summed up as *knowing Christ*. But the word "know" must have its full meaning. It's not enough to know *about* Christ, we must know him. We know all about King George V, and have an affection for his name, but we don't know him. And the attitude of many of us towards Christ can be delightfully described in the couplet that was really intended for the angels:

*"They know not him as Saviour,
But worship him as king."*

Our few intimate friends, on the other hand, we do know: and, when we give to the word "know" this full and lovely meaning, we begin to understand the question and answer: "What shall I do to inherit eternal life; or, as you put it, to know Christ?" "The first and great commandment is, 'Thou shalt love . . .' And the second is like unto it, 'Thou shalt love . . .'"

II

So true. So true. Do any of you find a difficulty in believing fully in Christ, and in really

knowing him? You do, do you not? Well, never mind. Don't worry about trying to find a firmer faith through books of Christian evidences and apologetics; put them back on their shelves for a while and go out into the world and set about loving it. And the more you develop a great heart that loves all things, the more you will get a gradual revelation of what love is, and the more you will wonder if Christ isn't, after all, the truth and explanation of everything.

Aim at a wide, general love. Love little children: and not only those that are clean and proper children, but those also that are jammy and dirty, and those that are undersized, ill-fed and repellent. Love youth: don't want to put it down for its conceit, and egotism, and intolerance, but love it for its infinite promise, its effervescing optimism, and its dreams; love it, even with purple socks and tilted hat and plastered hair. Love men and women of your own age; and love not only the loveable, but the proud, the haughty, the self-seeking, the petty, and the mean. Love old people; and not only those upon whose placid and gentle faces no one could look without loving them, but those also whom adversity has made querulous and trying. And, when you begin to love like that, you'll find the mist clearing between you and Christ. To love is the revelation of Christ.

III

But that isn't all. Love isn't love, if it stops at a sentimental good-will. See to it that it *gives*. For a simple example: next time there's a flag-day for the Waifs and Strays, or the Lifeboat, or the Hospitals, don't say: "Curse these flag-days. I'm sick to death of them. It's perfectly dreadful to be pestered at every street corner," but remember, some one's got to house the waifs; some one's got to float the lifeboat; some one's got to pay for the hospitals. And I promise you that every time you give generously—not for the credit of it, but out of your love, and because you must—you'll get a momentary revelation of Christ; you'll have a transient glimpse of the truth that God must have given Christ. God loved so that he gave . . . Compassion, you will suddenly see, is the first-born son of Love, and yet the same thing. Which is possibly another way of saying: "I believe in Jesus Christ, the only-begotten son of the Father, and of one substance with the Father."

Christ's words always meant far more than their surface meaning. That's why he frequently added: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." The majority of us hear but the surface meaning. For it is only those that love who hear deep calling to deep. To them he seems to say: Not

by a sign from Heaven will you get your revelation of me; nor by learned books, for I am hid from the wise and prudent; but go out and give food to the hungry man, and you will suddenly see me; clothe that half-naked child, and you'll know me; show kindness and hospitality to that poor stranger, and you'll learn that I am the truth; be slow to condemn this degraded prisoner—try visiting him instead—and you will understand that God is Love, and Love must give compassion, and that I am God's compassion incarnate. In other words, you will know God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

Have you sounded now the question and answer: "What shall I do to know Christ?" "Thou shalt love."

IV

But, beware, the converse is equally true. What shall I do to lose Christ? Thou shalt begin to hate. So surely as you begin to feel dislike, contempt, and vindictiveness towards your fellowmen; so surely as you begin to shut off your compassion for them, and to beat back your inclination to give; so surely as you begin to love only yourself, and to be impatient with little children, bitter with youth, inconsiderate and irritable with the old; so surely as you begin

to do these things, will the mist come and a cloud take Christ out of your sight.

The only revelation of Christ is through love. When you have learned to love, you will have ears to hear him, and eyes to see. But if you forget to love, or if you have never learned, you will never really hear his meaning, nor see the lines of his face. For whosoever hath love, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance. But whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away, even that he hath. Therefore spoke Jesus in parables, that those who have ears to hear may hear; while the others, alas!—seeing, they see not; and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand.

XII: WHY DID CHRIST GO UP?

I

“**G**O to my brothers, and say I go up.” That was the message which Christ entrusted to a prostitute for conveyance to the world.

Now, will you bear with me, while I try to lead you through one or two difficult thoughts. I want to get to the heart of the meaning of the words, “I go up.” We know that our Lord, when he ascended, went off the earth, and disappeared into a cloud. But why did he do that? We’re not so unsophisticated as to believe that any one could ascend, pierce the blue sky as though it were some solid thing, and enter the palace of Heaven. Space is infinite; and Heaven is where God is, and God is everywhere. Why, then, did Jesus go visibly *up* off the earth?

This is the answer. He did it because he had to express to his disciples a spiritual thing by a visible act. It was a sacramental proceeding: and all Christ’s dealings were sacramental; that is to say he always acted out spiritual things by outward and visible forms. It wasn’t *necessary*, when he healed a leper, that he should stretch

forth his hand and touch the man; he could have healed him by an effort of the will, as he often did heal over great distances; but the touch of his hand was a sacrament—an expression by a visible act that he was invisibly healing the man. It wasn't necessary that the stone of the Easter sepulchre should be rolled away. Christ's Resurrection body, which no longer conformed to the laws of this world and was able, as we are told, to come through closed doors, could have left the sealed sepulchre. But the stone was rolled away because God always gives us the outward and visible sign.

But to go further back than that. From the minute God, as it were, committed himself to the Incarnation, he committed himself to the sacramental principle—the expression of spiritual things in outward, visible, tangible and audible forms. The Incarnation is the expression of God in such a form. As we saw before, it is as though God said: “You dear people, I understand—who so well?—how impossible it is for you to grasp my infinite and incomprehensible self. And my Heaven, too, belongs to a world of which you have no experience, and, therefore, no terms to express. I must translate these things into easy terms for you.” We can't understand these things, any more than a deaf man can understand a Beethoven symphony, unless it is translated into

some medium which he can experience. And God had to be translated into the terms of man.

So came Christ, the first sacrament. Christ is God the spiritual, encased in an outward form. The first sacrament was laid by a peasant girl in the straw of a manger. Christ is *God in a sacrament*. Love Christ and you are loving the invisible God. Trust in Christ, and you are trusting in the invisible God. Learn the character of Christ and you learn the character of the invisible God. Where Christ is merciful, God is merciful. Where Christ is stern, God is stern. Where mercy outweighs wrath in Christ, it outweighs wrath in God.

II

So God is committed to doing everything in the sacramental way, and the religion that he left behind after his ascension is sacramental too. If God wants to wash away all sin from a soul, and to start it pure and lovely on its course as a Christian, it is not *necessary* to wash it with the waters of Baptism—God can cleanse without an outward form—but in his mercy and condescension he does it for us through an outward and visible form, which is a perfect picture or parable of what is happening spiritually; and a picture, moreover, which the simplest child can

understand, and the deepest philosopher appreciate. Hence the sacrament of Baptism.

If God wants to come right inside our souls to nourish and strengthen them, it is not *necessary* to come into our bodies through bread and wine—God can enter us without any outward form—but in his mercy and condescension he does it for us through an outward and visible form, which is a perfect picture or parable of what is happening spiritually; and a picture, moreover, which the simplest child can understand, and the deepest philosopher appreciate. Hence the sacrament of Holy Communion.

Have you ever thought how the parables of the gospel and the sacraments of the church are obviously the work of the same hand?

III

Everything in Christianity, then—its Christ-story and its present ordinances—is sacramental. And I fancy that the only religion which will become universal and survive will be a sacramental religion. Why? Because it corresponds to life as we know it. All life is sacramental. We ourselves are sacraments.

Let me explain. We are conscious of being thinking creatures. Thought is an impalpable, spiritual thing. And life is thought. When con-

scious thought stops, conscious life stops. And yet, although we are these spiritual beings, we are all expressed in bodies and no other way. The eyes with which we glance our thoughts are visible things. The words with which I am now clothing my invisible thoughts are outward things; visible, if you are reading them; audible, if you are listening to them—a matter of the tongue and the tangible air.

If you are intensely amused, your amusement is an invisible, spiritual something, but you express it by a strange, visible, alteration in the face, and a strange noise called laughter. A laugh is a sacrament. If you are sad, your sadness is an invisible spiritual thing, but you express it by a tear. A tear is a sacrament. If you are enthusiastic, when your side is winning at football, your enthusiasm is an invisible, spiritual thing, but you express it by a roar. The roar of a football crowd is a sacrament. If you feel a strange quickening of your friendship at the moment of parting with your friend, you express that invisible thing with a grip of the hand. The grip of a hand is a fine sacrament. If a rapture of love seizes you at the sight of your mate, and your desire is unto her, you express that invisible thing by a passionate kiss. A kiss is a more beautiful sacrament still. And the final consummation of love, which for too long we have blas-

phemously thought of almost as a thing of shame, is the most beautiful sacrament of all.

All life is sacramental. Therefore Christ was a sacrament and did everything sacramentally. Therefore he expressed the very difficult idea that he had finished his mission, and must change his state of conformity with this world to conformity with the world we don't understand but shall understand some day—he expressed this difficult idea, in his mercy and condescension and his effort to make things easy, like a big brother making things easy for his little brothers, by a rising off this earth and passing into a cloud. It was an expression by an act of a change which we have no terms to express.

IV

“Go to my brothers and say I go up.” That is the first time our Lord uses the word, “brothers.” We have taken the word, “ascend,” and seen wide thoughts in it. Let us glance at the word, “brothers.” Why did our Lord use the word “brothers” here for the first time? Surely because he wanted to say: “It is as their brother that I ascend into heaven. Not as God returning where he has been before, but as man arriving for the first time. I, the Son of God have been there before, but I, the son of man, have

never been there before. But now man conquers heaven and consolidates his position there. Where man has once been, other men can go. As your brother, I ascend. What the state is that I am going to now, you cannot understand. I can only express it by an ascending like this. But you will go to it too. You will conquer death, as your elder brother has done, and you will ascend." The best way to get at Christ's meaning, when he said, "Go to my brothers and say I ascend," is to alter it to, "Go to my brothers and say *we* ascend."

v

That was the message that Christ entrusted to a prostitute for conveyance to ten renegades. He sent them word that they would rise higher. He sent it by Mary Magdalene to His Holy Catholic Church; and His Holy Catholic Church consisted of a few men still in their sin. But they were unhappy about their sin. And to all of you, if you are unhappy about your sin, sends Christ his message by a fallen woman: "Go to my brothers in that house and say *we* ascend."

I believe in the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Sinners. The more I think about it, the more I see that the Communion of Saints and the Communion of Sinners mean the same

thing. Take courage. It is because Christ sent the message by a repentant sinner to worrying sinners: "Go to my brothers and say we ascend," that we can say: "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Sinners, the Resurrection of the dead, and the Life everlasting."

XIII: THE WAY THROUGH

I

THIS is a talk about The Way Through—the way through some great difficulty, sorrow, or trial, which seems so impenetrable that you hardly dare venture into its darkness—and, I'm sorry to say, it has five texts. They are: "Follow me"; "And he went forward a little way, and fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, take away this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done"; "And there appeared an Angel unto him from Heaven, strengthening him"; "Rise, let us be going"; "For the glory that was set before him, he endured the cross."

II

It may be that there is one of you, who at this very time is overshadowed by an approaching trial, which he feels he can never face: whether that be so or not, it is certain that all of you, not once nor twice in the rest of your story, will stand on the hither side of a great trouble, and

be tempted to say: "I can't go through with it! I can't go through with it!"

Well, always remember that, no matter how dark and terrifying the trouble may be, there has gone through it before you the representative man, Jesus, our leader. In his character as a man, he has explored a route through the dark forest; and he has purposely left behind him the chart of his journey.

So, when you stand alone outside your trial, and say: "I can't go through with it! I can't go through with it!" I want you to hear his voice saying: "Follow me, I will show you the way through."

And you must follow our Lord into the garden of Gethsemane. It's the only place where, if your will is bent to breaking point, you will force it straight again.

Will you consider Gethsemane very carefully with me for a minute? It's a glorious story for us faltering humans. And that's why our Lord must have told it to his disciples. For have you ever realised that the story of Gethsemane, like the earlier story of the Temptation, can only have come from the lips of our Lord himself? In each case he was withdrawn apart from his disciples, and went through his agony alone. I have often wondered if there isn't an argument for the Resurrection in the existence of this tale of

Gethsemane. It is not likely that his followers would have invented it; and our Lord had no time to tell it to them between his agony in the garden and his crucifixion on Calvary; so I can only imagine he told it in the peace of after-days.

And he told it, I believe, because it is the chart of the way through.

For first, Gethsemane teaches us for our comfort how far—how very far—the will may be bent towards failure without sin. There is no sin in the cry: “I don’t want to go through with it!” Did not our Lord cry: “Abba, Father, take away this cup from me?” Indeed the manhood of our Lord was probably never so truly divine, and himself never achieved so truly his sonship of God, as when his will reached breaking-point, and did not break. So *you* will never be nearer your sonship than when your will reaches breaking-point and fails to break.

And secondly, Gethsemane teaches us that there’s no such thing as unanswered prayer. The actual request which we make of God may not be granted, but the prayer will be answered. Our Lord’s request that his trial might pass from him was not granted, but his prayer was answered—answered with a gift from Heaven of strength to march through it.

“There appeared an Angel unto him from Heaven strengthening him.” That statement

must be based on our Lord's own words: and it is remarkable that he used similar words when telling his disciples the earlier story of the temptation; for there, you will remember, he said that angels came and ministered to him. Now, if you want to enter more deeply into the spiritual truth of all this, you will straightway get out of your head (as you did in the case of the Temptation story) that there was an appearance of an angel with streaming white robes and phosphorescent wings. We saw that the angels ministering to our Lord was the same experience as we know when, after temptation, we rise from our knees, conquerors, saying: "That's over; I've won!" We feel then a wonderful elation and joy; and perhaps more saintly eyes than ours, gifted with a greater clairvoyance, would see, at such a moment, the invisible spirits about them. I don't know. It doesn't matter. It's the fact that matters.

So much for the angels of the Temptation. The angel of Gethsemane is, beyond doubt, experienced by us, after an agonising prayer to God, in the form of a strange, exhilarating infusion of strength—strength to march through our trouble. We rise from our knees with the will braced, full of joy, and capable of all things. That was what happened to our Lord. Think of the joy with which he rose from his knees—think

of the Joy in the garden, as well as the Agony in the garden—for, mark well, in so far as our salvation was wrought by our Lord's mastering of his will, it was wrought at Gethsemane rather than Calvary.

"Rise, let us be going." Oh, the beauty of those words, following immediately after the story of Gethsemane. Don't you see that they mean this: "I've prayed that the cup might pass from me, but I see now that it can't possibly be so: still, I've received strength from my prayer, and I'm ready for all things. Rise, let us be going." And, from that moment, our Lord marched straight on Calvary. I want you to get a vision of that straight, steady walk, beginning with the words: "Rise, let us be going." The Apostles rose and went too, but they couldn't keep up with him. They were overcome and fell out on the march. Only the Colonel of that battalion arrived at his map-references. And John, perhaps. Poor Peter tried to live up to his brave words: "Though all should forsake thee, yet will not I"; but see, even he is lagging far behind. He is not equal to the straight steady walk of his master. "Rise, let us be going," said our Lord. And he went.

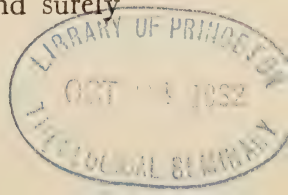
You begin to see the chart of the way through. First, Gethsemane, where you pray God that your forthcoming trial may be removed. Quite

possibly, he will grant you your request, exactly as you ask it, and remove the trial; but, if not, why, then, you must fight it out in Gethsemane with your will; and God will answer your prayer with strength. Then you will get up from your knees, filled with determination to march through, saying: "Rise, let me be going. Let me go into the middle of it. Let me go and get hurt. I'm its equal. I'm its master."

That's how our Lord did it. "I've made up my mind to go through with it. I'd best go straight for it." And he went; and it hurt even more than he expected. "My God—my God—why hast thou forsaken me? . . . It's done."

III

But that isn't all. Our Lord's will was braced in Gethsemane for suffering. But he required something to keep it set. He had to keep his eyes on something before him, so that his will should not falter. What was it. This is most wonderful. Think of it! Our Lord was so exactly like ourselves—exactly like a man—exactly like a boy—that he kept the glory that lay beyond all his trouble as a motive for going through with it. For the glory that was set before him he endured the cross. And that's the last sign-post on the way through. And surely



there's no more practical lesson. There's always a glory beyond a cross; and, when you've made your decision in your Gethsemane; when you've risen from your knees with the words: "Rise, let me be going!" then you will not waver, hesitate, nor fall, if only you keep your eyes—not on the trouble—but on the glory that lies beyond—the glory of those days when it shall be only a memory, but a memory laden with thoughts of victory.

IV

Now, let us apply all this to ourselves.

Is there one of you, who knows perfectly well that he ought to confess something to parents, or wife, or employer, and thinks: "It's no good. I can't do it. I can't go through with it"?

Is there one of you, who sees the shadow of a great bereavement falling across his feet and thinks: "I can't face it. It'll be too much for me"?

Is there one who knows that he is sentenced to ill-health or pain and thinks: "It's not worth going on"?

Is there some one, who knows that quite soon he will be at the turnstile of death and thinks: "I'm afraid of it. I don't want to venture into the darkness alone"?

To one and all, who have trials to face, come the words: "Follow me." "And he went forward a little way, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, take away this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done." "And there appeared an angel unto him from Heaven, strengthening him." "Rise, let us be going." "For the glory that was set before him he endured the cross."

Gethsemane, where you bow your head in prayer, so that you may have power to lift it for the blow; Calvary, where you keep your eyes fixed on the glory beyond, and so endure your cross, whatever it may be; Paradise, where you enter into the glory—the glory of the thought that you faced your bereavement with head up-lifted and fearless eyes; or that you accepted ill-health and pain and were unbeaten by them; or that you stepped into death unaffrighted. "Follow me": Gethsemane, Calvary, Paradise. For that, unless God sees fit to grant your request and remove your trial, is the way through.

XIV: AN ESSAY ON REUNION

I

WE are all familiar with those pictures of the Transfiguration which show Christ raised above the ground with a luminous glory all about him, and a lesser but radiant figure on either side, Moses to his right and Elijah to his left. And the youngest of us could explain that Moses was there as representing the Law, and Elijah the prophets. But, if we were asked to write an essay explaining the full significance of the Law and the Prophets to right and left of our Lord, I surmise we should spend a considerable time biting the end of our pen and staring at a blank sheet of paper. Or probably we should have written the title, "The Law and the Prophets," and drawn an ornamental line beneath. And that's as far as we should have got. Now we'll try to fill up that blank sheet of paper. We'll write the essay together.

II

The Hebrew State, we have elsewhere seen, was exactly like any modern state in possessing

great opposing parties; and, for our present purposes, we shall consider them as two, a Right and a Left. So long as men organise together into social communities, there will be a party of the Right which stands for the Constitution, tradition, the Law as it has been handed down, old customs and ceremonies; a party that is glorious for such qualities as loyalty even unto death, reverence for the past, prudence and caution in legislating for the future. And there will be a party of the Left, a splendid rebel party which desires reform, progress, a new Heaven and a new earth, and freedom from old shackles and outworn taboos; a party that is glorious for its vision, its divine discontent, its restlessness beneath dead tradition, and its unconquerable faith that the world can be made better for man, and man for the world. Trace back through English history from the present moment. There is something glorious in our Die-hards of to-day, as there is also about those who agitate for vast changes in the confident hope that such things will give to the submerged a fairer chance. Back we go through Conservative and Radical, Tory and Whig, Jacobite and Hanoverian, till we come to the gay, laughing Cavalier, ready to give land and plate and gold and life for the sacred person of the king, face to face with the glorious but austere figure of Cromwell, training his Iron-

sides to pray, as earnestly as they fought, for the liberties of the people and the New Order.

III

Just so was the Hebrew state. Only, since the Hebrew state was a theocratic state—a state, that is, that looked to God as its king and organised itself as God's subjects—its politics and religion were one and the same thing. Their party of the Right was the party of the Law; those who stood for every tittle of the Law as given by Moses, and for all the other accumulated traditions about ceremonial and ritual, and about the distinctions between clean and unclean. The danger of such a party is always, of course, to worship the tradition and the established order for their own sake, and to forget that established institutions are only means to an end—morality and right-dealing among men. So they had their bitter opponents, the truly amazing, splendidly rebel party of the Prophets; those austere preachers of righteousness and reform. It was a party that lashed vigorously the priests and the kings; generally a lonely, unpopular, puritan party; but it never failed to produce great, towering figures that could dominate the throne. One by one these great leaders of the Prophetical party appeared; and passed, but not

until they had handed their banner into the firm hands of a successor. And their banner, we may say, bore the party cry: "Mercy, not sacrifice." Who is this all-powerful comimoner that dares to approach King Saul when he is flushed with victory and to ask: "What meaneth this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? You were commanded of God to destroy them, and you kept them for sacrifice. Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifice as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice!" And see, the terrible old man hews Agag in pieces. It is Samuel, the prophet, the king-maker, who is powerful enough to overthrow Saul, and set up a shepherd boy on his throne. Again, who is this stern figure that dares to point the finger of denunciation at the all-conquering David and to accuse him of adultery and murder? "Thou art the man," says Nathan, the fearless prophet. Again, what is this dark figure that rises in the path before King Ahab, and denounces the king's annexation of Naboth's vineyard, and the bloody deeds of Jezebel, Ahab's queen? "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy," asks Ahab, "thou that troubleth Israel." It is Elijah; and he goes off to anoint another king. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Malachi, and the rest, carry on Elijah's torch, till at last we see it in the hands

of the great hermit who wore a raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins: the heroic figure that dared to rebuke the incest of King Herod, and paid for it with his life.

IV

Yes, the key to a true reading of the Old Testament is to understand that it is largely the polemical writings of these two strongly opposed parties. The books of Moses are the treasured tradition of the party of the Law and the Priestly castes, and the magnificent series of rhapsodies—Isaiah, Jeremiah, and many of the psalms—are the imperishable literature of the rebel Prophets.

V

And lo! both in amicable agreement on either side of the transfigured Christ, Moses, the great law-giver, and Elijah, the prince of the prophets! Both appearing as *glorious*; both, when the true character of Jesus shines through, finding their point of union and harmony in him; both acknowledging that their divided lines meet in the death that he should accomplish at Jerusalem. Jesus endorses the truth that is in both. He has, so to speak, a hand for each. "I came, not to

destroy the Law, but to fulfil it. Every priestly sacrifice of the old temple service was good, in that it taught a sense of sin and of the necessity of atonement and foreshadowed my own sacrifice—as did the scapegoat of the Law, and the Passover Lamb. You did well in so jealously guarding the old tradition: and I endorse it by transfiguring some of it into Christian ceremonies. Your Passover feast shall be my Holy Communion. But all must be saved from formalism by the message of the Prophets. That indeed have I come to endorse. I will have mercy and not sacrifice. Ye must not tithe mint, and anise, and cummin, and forget the weightier matters of kindness and pity. These things ye ought to have done, and not to have left the others undone. The old Law was right, when it said, Thou shalt not, Thou shalt not, Thou shalt not; but it must be warmed by the great, positive Prophetical Law, Thou shalt love, Thou shalt love. On these two commandments hang both the Law and the Prophets. They are the truth of both Moses and Elias. Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do unto them; for this is the Law and the Prophets. This is both Moses and Elias.”

VI

So Christ unites both the formalist and the spiritualist (that is, the one who says, "God is Spirit, and He must be worshipped in spirit only"), as he always unites the outward and visible with the inward and spiritual. When shall we learn the lesson? We haven't learnt it in two thousand years. Christ is hardly ascended ere Peter appears to be rather for the Law, and Paul for the spirit: they quarrel, Paul withstanding Peter to the face, because he stood for certain questions of meats and circumcision, and beggarly elements of the Law. Need I remind you that the great line of Popes has confessedly followed Peter, and become the party of the Law, the ceremonial and ritual party, while the old prophetic spirit has blazed again in John Wyclif, Martin Luther, John Huss, Ridley, Latimer, and Wesley? Need I tell you again the story of our royal martyr, Charles, who, with all his faults, yet died for the old tradition, which was the Law to him; and of Archbishop Laud, who was content to follow the lead of his king; or, on the other side, the indomitable deeds and sufferings of the early Nonconformists? Need I point at the present moment to Rome on the extreme right of Christendom, and the Quaker on the extreme left; so obviously the old Law and the old

Prophets. Rome appears to have built the tabernacle for Moses, and the Quakers that for Elias.

VII

Don't you think that, when we have learned the lesson of the Transfiguration, where both the Law and the Prophets appeared as glorious, we shall have learned much that will help us to Reunion? Both types of mind find their point of union and harmony in Jesus.

Both are necessary. There is no salutary discipline, nor well-ordered spiritual life, without the Law; without a system of observances, duties, and spiritual exercises. From want of the will-building that comes from such rigorous things, we shall probably end by giving a sort of sentimental assent to the prophetic message of love and freedom, and really being quite selfish, irreligious, unpractising Christians. But most necessary, too, is the prophetic message, lest the Law, the forms, and ceremonies become mere shibboleths and fetishes, unvitalised by sincerity and love.

VIII

I have always liked to indulge a dream that one day, not in our lifetime, perhaps, nor our

children's, but at some distant date in the womb of time, there will be a great Reunion Sunday. It will be a Sunday when all the churches the world over will sing in their separated tabernacles *Te Deum*, in thanksgiving to God that the old feuds are over, and Christendom, as from that moment, is united. And I like to hope that for that day they will choose the Feast of the Transfiguration, for there we see that both are glorious, the Law and the Prophets; and that, when they draw together, Christ rises transfigured between them.

XV: THE ATTACK OF THE STRONG MAN

I

THE Strong man armed, says our Lord, keeps his goods in peace: but, if there is a neighbour, stronger and better-armed than he, the peace can only be a comparative one, full of doubt and apprehension. It is not until that stronger neighbour, the warrior who is unmatched in his equipment and strength, attacks and wins the goods for himself that they can really be kept in peace. Of course, our Lord, by the first and lesser strong man armed, meant Satan; and, by the second and better armed, that confident neighbour who haunts and harasses the outworks till the citadel falls, he meant himself. Therefore, whenever I shall speak of the strong man armed, who really keeps his goods in peace, understand I shall mean our true proprietor, Christ.

Now, let me sketch for you your own spiritual life, and you will see how full of meaning it all is. There was a time once—was there not—when you threw up your allegiance to Christ and decided to be free of him. Perhaps it was doubt that worked the rebellion; or, more probably, just the difficulty of being a Christian, and the dislike

of all the self-sacrifice that it involved. You were anxious lest, having Christ, "you must have nought beside." So you threw it all up; and Christ became, no longer your owner, but just a neighbour, very powerful, who quartered without your gates. And, oh! at first, you found it good to be free. It was good to be able to get into bed without the arduous exercise of prayer; it was good to be at liberty to lie in bed on a Sunday morning, or to spend the day walking on the headlands and looking out to sea, and no longer to be in two minds about the Sunday golf-links or the Sunday cinema; it was good to be a little less guarded with your tongue, a little less strict about money matters, and a little less liberal, maybe, in your charities. Yes, there was much that Satan could give to you, his prodigal; but, tell me, could he give you peace? could he give you happiness? could he satisfy you? was there not all the time a repining restlessness?

Then pain came. What form it took I know not; ill-health, perhaps; or business trouble; or mental depression; or anxiety; or bereavement; but, actually, there attacked with it the strong man armed, that warrior without the gates, who must become your adversary, because he is your lover. Yes, he attacked; and the thought asserted itself: "Perhaps—perhaps, after all, he *is* the only solution to all diffi-

culties, and the only giver of serenity and quiet happiness." But probably you repulsed the assault, and it passed: you patched up your trouble; and on went your life, giving you a certain amount of pleasure and interest, but never, never giving you a sense of freedom from sham and hypocrisy; nor self-respect, security, and peace. Then pain came once more; and, behind it, the strong man armed attacked again. You took refuge in reviling God as unjust and cruel, and swore that you would not be scourged into submission. But the thought haunted you: "I wonder if all these successive pains are really a mark of his favour—not punishment—no, no—but just Christ beating up to win me. And, oh! it would be good to be won. It would be very calm, very quiet." You flung yourself upon your knees, and, while you could not pray very collectedly, bits of remembered prayers came easily to your lips: "God be merciful to me, a sinner." "Speak the word only, and thy servant shall be healed." "O Lamb of God, I come." "Jesu, lover of my soul, let me to thy bosom fly." A calm settled down upon you; and you rose quietly and happily from your knees. Possibly you walked to the window, and, gazing out, thought: "This is peace." The strong man armed had come to keep his goods in peace.

I do not say that thenceforward you were free

from all pain, and all struggle. As a matter of fact, a peace, where there is no struggle is inconceivable, for one of man's greatest joys, that he would miss most, is the joy of triumphing over obstacles. But, amid such adversity as God was pleased to send you, there was a patience, resignation, and peace in believing.

Perhaps, later on, you were guilty of another backsliding, another rebellion. Perhaps some of you are still in a state of temporary revolt. If so, you are conscious, are you not, of the undiscouraged attack of the strong man armed? I suspect you resist it with the words: "What's the good? I've surrendered to Christ before, and always sooner or later, dropped back into sin?" But the attacks continue—and will continue. And to all of you who are saying to yourselves: "Yes, this is my story that he is telling," let me add this for your comfort. Your destiny is probably written in two words, Final Perseverance. Finally you will persevere. One day you will finally surrender. Why not to-day? I promise you, not freedom from struggling, but great peace, confidence, quiet, and a glowing happiness.

II

I wonder why this train of ideas was suggested to me by a visit to the British cemeteries on the

old Somme battlefields. I think it was because we are none of us selfish in our desire of salvation; and we feel that it is not enough to find peace for ourselves: we wish also to think of those whom we have lost as wrapped in the peace of the strong man armed.

A few days ago I was standing in the cemetery at Forceville, near Albert, which is now complete. I think I have never seen anything that is so exactly true to the reserved genius of the British people. As you know, the gravestones are all exactly alike; square, straight, and arranged in lines of military precision. The turf about them is as close and weedless as an English lawn. At one end, upon three wide steps, stands the long Stone of Remembrance, shaped like an altar, but devoid of garniture save for its words: "Their name liveth for evermore." At the other end, there rises, tapering, the tall, slender Cross of Sacrifice. The headstones, the Cross of Sacrifice, and the Stone of Remembrance are all in the same white stone. The only colour is the green of the close turf, and the flowers tended by English gardeners. The atmosphere of this cemetery is the atmosphere of London's Cenotaph: a calm, proud reticence, austere and uncomplaining. As I stood there I felt I must be standing in the most tranquil spot in the whole world; and I thought, "This is a good ex-

ample of the power of man's art to express, even in stone, healing thought. In this cemetery there is no room for bitterness."

Another evening I visited the still incomplete cemetery of Vignacourt. There was the same Cross of Sacrifice, and the same Stone of Remembrance. But there was another thing; and the sight of it gave me a sudden minute of deep emotion. It was a statue placed there by the French people of the Commune of Vignacourt, and it represented a French sentry, resting on his rifle, and guarding the graves of his allies. And on the pedestal was written what our English reserve could never have written, but what the fine unreserve of the French could not have failed to write. The words were:

"O BROTHERS IN ARMS,
FALLEN ON THE FIELD OF HONOUR,
SLEEP IN PEACE,
WE ARE WATCHING OVER YOU."

Good people, all these men, though they probably never told you anything about it, went through the same spiritual experience that I have outlined—the sense of the repeated attacks of the strong man armed. And I think that the moment when Death seemed inevitable was in many cases the last victorious attack of the Tremendous

Lover, so that he encamped around them with his great peace, even before he took them into his nearer presence.

I know of what I am speaking; for once in the war, I felt certain that everything would be over before sunset. I had often thought it quite likely that the end was near, but, on this occasion the certainty was as great as that of a condemned prisoner on the day of execution. I am not sorry now to have known that moment, for it enabled me to experience the emotions of those awaiting immediate death: and I find it hard to believe that any man can be so hardened as not to make the final surrender then. I do not suggest that those who surrendered at the moment of death were ready to go straight to Heaven, for, as I have told you, peace does not mean freedom from struggling, but rather contains within itself the joy of triumphing over obstacles; but I do suggest that they who are beyond, and you who yet remain, if your experience is such as I have described, are almost certainly destined to persevere finally, and so to converge upon that Heaven where there shall be no more sorrow nor crying, for there, indeed, the strong man armed, will keep his goods in peace.

XVI: THE GOD OF JACOB

I

I WANT now just to re-tell an old story in new terms. I shall seek thereby to right a great wrong, and to re-establish in your affection one of the big men of all time. There is, in English minds, a misinterpretation and dislike of the character of the patriarch, Jacob. An Eastern and mystical mind is much quicker to see the beauty in Jacob's soul; but we western, material, and sporting nations are all partisans of his fine, material, and sporting brother, Esau. And, until we understand Jacob aright, we can never learn the pregnant lesson which is taught us by the fact that God preferred Jacob to Esau. "I am the God of Jacob." And, just *because* of our natural sympathy for Esau, it is necessary for us westerns to learn the lesson. We are such Esaus, ourselves. I wonder if I can retell the story.

II

There was once a beautiful and attractive woman, with all the makings of a good wife, a

loving mother, and a keen servant of God. But, inasmuch as she lived in a primitive age, she mixed a good deal of superstition with her religion. Her name was Rebekkah. And there came a-wooing her, as she led her camels to water, the son of a great sheik; and she married him, and entered right-heartily into all his ideals. For Isaac was a true son of his grand old father, Abraham, that spiritual explorer who firmly believed that through his seed a great revelation and blessing should be given to the world, and that this same Isaac, who had been born to him in his old age, was obviously the child of promise, through whom the strange family hope should be handed down. Rebekkah, like a good wife, identified herself with all this: and when she, in her turn, felt a stirring of Isaac's offspring in her womb, she hastened to an oracle, after her fashion at once religious and superstitious, to enquire about the future of the life that she should bring into the world. And the oracle gave forth an enigmatic utterance that filled the future with mystery:

*"Two nations are in thy womb,
And two manner of people shall be separated
from thy bowels,
And the elder shall serve the younger."*

III

Little wonder that Rebekkah watched with interest the growth of the two boys that were born to her. And on evenings, when she doubtless told them at her knee all about their magnificent old grandfather, Abraham, and the strange Hope that lodged in the family, this is what she would see: the elder, Esau, a fine boy, with cheeks ruddy from open-air sports, and eyes sparkling with health, and breast, I dare say, generally empty of breath from running, would be restive and inattentive, and anxious to be out in the fields to see his gins and traps; while the other, the younger, a quiet, dreamy boy, would fix her with thrilled and captured eyes, responding at once to the family aspiration, and dreaming of being a big patriarch like grandfather Abraham, rich in spiritual gifts and not without great wealth in lands and cattle. No doubt Rebekkah loved her lively and feckless Esau, but her whole heart went out to the wide-eyed, imaginative and sensitive Jacob. In him only could she see the potential greatness worthy of Abraham; and she would regret that he was not the first-born, the child that should inherit the hope. And often there recurred to her the mysterious words of the oracle: "The elder shall serve the younger."

IV

Then a little thing happened which exactly illustrated the two boys' characters. One bright day about dinner-time Esau returned—such boys have a habit of returning about dinner-time—and he was flushed, breathless, and as hungry as the hunter he was. "Food," he said; "give me food, or I shall forthwith die." "Well, look here," said Jacob, "here's a bargain"—evidently boys were the same unpleasant things then that they are now—"if I give you up this food, will you let me be the eldest son, so to speak, and inherit the great promise?" (You see, Jacob, true son of his mother, was mixing with his remarkable gift for religion that superstition which thinks you can trick or compel God.) Now the food smelt good, and Esau said something like this: "Oh, I can't worry about all your pretty ideas for the future. If I don't eat, I shall die; and a live dog's better than a dead lion. A bird in the hand's worth two in the bush. It's a bargain." Thus Esau, in this small incident, showed his utter inability to follow in the steps of that great explorer, Abraham. He was delightful, but he was a child of the moment. He was not destined to join the immortals. The other, in spite of much in his character that was perverse, was the one to watch.

V

Time passed; and Isaac, their father, reached the point of death. Rebekkah, in her superstition, was desperate. To her, Isaac's death-bed blessing would mean everything. Surely, surely, young Jacob was the only one who could carry on the tradition. He had a manifest gift for God, while Esau had none. It would really be a kindness to God to secure that Isaac's blessing should fall on Jacob's head. She was the boy's mother, and she ought to know. Such a character as Rebekkah's, at once religious and superstitious, always thinks that the end justifies the means; and so we have the dark story of the deceit played on Isaac and the trapping of the blessing. Poor young Jacob, in his overmastering desire, implanted by his mother, to co-operate with God for the betterment of the world, really thought, or tried to think, that it could be done by trickery. And the blind Isaac blessed him.

"See the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed.

*Therefore God give thee of the dew of Heaven,
and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of
corn and wine.*

*Let people serve thee [This is where the ambitious Jacob thrilled with excitement.], and
let nations bow down to thee."*

VI

Now, we know Esau's type, generous, but head-strong and hot-headed; not the type to offend. Rebekkah saw the gleaming vengeance in his eyes, and heard his words: "For this, Brother Jacob dies"; and the poor woman, frightened at her own sin, said to Jacob: "Hasten away! Fly! No time to lose! Fly to the uncle, my brother Laban; but come back to me—come back one day. Am I to lose husband and son in a single day?"

And Jacob fled quickly, as all guilty youths have to fly, over bleak and stony hills, getting dusty and footsore. His pleasant sin, like the dead-sea apples, had turned to dust and ashes in his mouth. He had lost home and father and mother; and Esau, his twin-brother, was waiting to kill him. The magnitude of the disaster was showing him, though he would reject the conclusion, that the act which he had tried to justify was really a despicable treachery. I think I know what his thoughts were as he stumbled along. He was feeling a dogged indifference, a hard fatalism; trying to persuade himself that he was the offended party and not the offender; and all the while, as always in such moments, there was a haunting desire to admit guilt, and to fling himself upon a compassionate God, surrendering to

him, and henceforth essaying sanctification. At last, tired out, on a bleak spot, where there was nothing but stones, he threw himself down in a careless collapse. He put the stones under his head, and, in utter physical and mental weariness, slept. And he dreamed. And in his dream his true undernature asserted itself, that aspiration to spiritual greatness which was his noblest thing. He dreamed that the stones round about piled themselves up into steps that ascended to Heaven. Jacob dreamed of scaling Heaven. And he saw God at the summit, and the angels.

It's rather pathetic—a punished boy, lying down defiantly and dreaming of angels. It reveals that loftier quality which two people had always seen, his mother and God. And these are the two, I suppose (putting all sentimentality aside), who do see mainly the noblest in us. It was because of this spirituality that his mother made a favourite of him, and God was content to say: "I am the God of Jacob."

VII

He woke to find the dawn on the hills. He felt at once humiliated, contrite, ready to accept punishment, and yet confident. After the manner of his great ancestor, Abraham, for he was

a real chip of that old block, he set up an altar, using for the purpose the pillow on which he had dreamed of God. And he explained to God his readiness to serve him, and his hope that God would remunerate him with wealth.

Now, don't judge Jacob too hardly: look into your own heart and see if he isn't exactly like you. His surrender to God was not complete. He wanted to be good, but at the same time to hug his less noble ambitions. We're all the same. We'd all love the peace and rest which come from giving ourselves utterly to God, but there are certain ruling desires and habits we cannot forgo. Jacob longed to be a great sheik like Abraham, with wives and sons, and camels and oxen and sheep. And he tried to harmonise this earthly ambition with his spiritual ambition, as we all do, till we learn our lesson, whether we be kaisers or popes or grocers or parsons. God only occupies the whole of our territory by degrees. So we see Jacob still scheming, sometimes perhaps unscrupulously, to be a great and wealthy man. And he largely succeeds, as he works with his uncle Laban. That is the uglier side of his character, as it is with most of us: the more beautiful side, the idealistic, the affectionate, and the capacity for self-sacrifice, is shown by one sentence, which it would be painting the lily to

elaborate: "And Jacob loved Rachel; and Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed but a few days for the love he had to her."

I will only glance at the thought that God was serving twenty—thirty years to win Jacob; and I suspect they seemed but a few days for the love he had to him.

VIII

And so to the last scene. We witness Jacob returning to his home-country, a rich man, with his wives and his sons, and his camels and oxen and sheep. Doubtless he thought God had accepted his harmony between his worldly ambitions and his spiritual ambitions, since he had thus so prospered him. But not so: God was only assembling to attack again. For, as Jacob drew near the home he had left years before, there was brought to him the alarming message: "Behold, Esau, thy brother, cometh to meet thee with four hundred men."

Ah! was he to be dogged for ever with his old sin. Had not God forgotten, or at least forgiven? Terror overwhelmed him: and, as often comes at such a moment, a sense at last of the folly of compromising and compounding with God. He saw that fighting against the highest that was in him was fighting against God. And he must either surrender finally to God, or let

him go. "O God of my father Abraham"—you hear the true Jacob speaking—"God of Isaac, the Lord which said unto me, Return unto thy country, and I will deal well with thee. I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies: for with my staff I passed over Jordan, and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hands of my brother Esau, for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children."

Time was short. Esau was drawing near. Jacob had to fight his last fight with God, since now he knew that yielding to anything less than the highest was fighting against God. He had to decide whether he would hold to God, or lose him for ever, together with the hope of being the channel of God's great promise to the world. He wanted to be alone, to fight it out. It was dark now, and he had reached the river at the ford Jabbok. He sent over all his company, and remained alone on the hither bank, as if he would not cross till he had made his decision. He fell on his knees. He *must* make the surrender: he could not lose God, and with God, the blessing and hope of his family. In his agony it seemed that he actually was wrestling with God in the darkness, holding him that he might not go, and crying: "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." It is only the boy who had

wanted so much his father's blessing—grown old. But he saw now that God's was the blessing men must seek, and God could not bless what is marred with self-seeking and duplicity. He had reached exactly that spiritual state expressed in the climax of the *Hound of Heaven*, when God is fast winning, and the soul cries: "My harness, piece by piece, thou hast hewn from me, and smitten me to my knee; I am defenceless utterly."

The contest began to decline; and Jacob knew that God was victorious—which was to say that himself was victorious, for, in this contest, victory was surrender to God. He knew that God, his assailant, had accepted and blessed him. It seemed that God said he should no more be called Jacob, but Israel, which means (not, *a prince with God*) but just this: *God perseveres*. With such as Jacob—that is with such struggling, but spiritual, people as ourselves—God perseveres till he wins them. Maybe he serves twenty, thirty, forty years to win them, and they seem but a few days for the love he has to them. God is the God of Jacob.

"And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men." And Esau, so splendid in his lesser way, ran to meet Jacob, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

XVII: THE ROYAL LINE

I

I DO not believe that we shall ever succeed in making Ascension Day, or even Easter Day, so popular a festival as Christmas. It can never win the popular imagination in the same way. Most people, I think, believe that the world was all the better for the birth of that little baby at Bethlehem. They see why they should rejoice at his coming: they do not see so well why they should rejoice at his departure. And, as it is now, so it was in the beginning. Everybody burst into song and worship and present-giving that first Christmas-tide: Zachariah, Mary, the shepherds, the angels, and the magi. But at the first Ascension Day, the men of Galilee only stood gazing up into heaven. It was not till they had been instructed that they returned with great joy, and went and worshipped in the temple. It is my part now to try to instruct you, so that you may worship.

II

So we tell it as a story, entitled "The Royal Line."

We are going as far down into the roots of it all as we can get. We look back into the mists before the universe was created, and we see—what? Why, God dreaming; as we men, made in his likeness, dream; God dreaming of all that he was going to do. He was going to create something, and it was going to be very good. He was going to create a world, as a means whereby he could produce after ages and ages of growth, a being very like God, intellectual, free-willed, loving. That being, Man, should issue from the world, and become a fitting companion for God.

That was the dream. Now pause for a minute to meet the first objection. Agnostic philosophers have always recorded their great difficulty in believing in the creation of something out of nothing; and they fall back on the only possible alternative, the eternity of matter—which is at least as difficult to believe as the creation of something out of nothing. The creation of the world is *not* the creation of something out of nothing: it is the creation of something out of God. God is love; and love must create out of itself. Even our human love must create; if it reaches its consummation, it creates something out of itself—it creates a little child. We talk of procreation. And more, we would appear to be just discovering that, if this

force of procreation in man be repressed, it will issue in the creation of things of the imagination: poems, symphonies, great business schemes, or perhaps vast military plans. It must create something that did not exist before: something material, or something spiritual. And God is the fountain-head of that force. And so came creation and the sun. And this (reading the Bible alongside of that other bible which God has written in the rocks of the earth) seems to be the story.

From the sun was flung off a flaming mass, which continued to spin round it, cooling the while. As it cooled, the steam round about it condensed into water on the hot, bare, volcanic rocks, and ran into warm seas. And there in that warm water life appeared. But the solid land was still stone-dead and naked. Life, in its various low forms, crept up from the water, accommodating itself first to the mud where the tides rolled back; then to the steaming lagoons; then to the inland marshes; and at last to dry land—ever, you see, an ascension, an ascent. The under-water animals became the half-water—half-land animals; and finally these amphibians climbed the hills. And somewhere among all those low species of life was the royal line that should culminate in man. We cannot find it; but there in the hot seas, there in the oppressive

lagoons, there in the tepid fens, there on the sloping hills ascended the royal house of man. And then, when the mammals, emancipated from water, were developing brain, and some social instinct, the air chilled; and, creeping menacingly over the world, came the ice. Now, look to it, all you living things, only the best of you will survive. Together with many other brother creatures, the Royal House, possibly because they had discovered fire, stood the test. Nay, the hardship probably schooled them to better things than they had known; for, when the fourth and last glacial age passed away, it was to reveal man in the ascendant, and the royal house on the throne.

And it may be somewhere about this time that there happened that wonderful thing, which is meant in Holy Scripture when it says: "God breathed into man's nostrils, and man became a living soul." Just as a king might invest his favourite son with certain prerogatives of the crown, and *carte blanche* in many matters, so God—perhaps by a sudden move, but more probably by a gradual education—invested his favourite with conscious free-will, obviously so that the love, obedience, and worship, which was going to rejoice him, might be voluntary and not forced, and thus more beautiful: for God ever aims at the more beautiful. So God took

his great and loving risk with the Royal Line, and the Royal Line failed.

Now, that's not extraordinary. All the story, up to this, shows God giving to the various forms of life their chance to make good, and win through hardship, necessarily in their own strength, because that alone would develop them into higher forms. And the Royal Line has ascended through all the material tests, but failed in the spiritual test, through which alone it can ascend to God.

III

That closes the first half of the story. To understand the next move you must consider the amazingly true doctrine of the Trinity, or at least of a Plurality of Persons within the Godhead. If you think deep enough, you will see that the idea of a plurality of persons within the godhead, though not discoverable by reason, is, when once revealed, not only comfortable to reason, but even inevitable. God is love: and can you imagine love without an object for its affection? Perfect Love must from all eternity have had a perfectly satisfying object, and a reciprocating object, for its love: and that's what we mean by the eternally begotten son of the Father, God from God. Truly, if God is love, it has al-

ways seemed to me easier to believe in God as more than one person than as God eternally alone.

Now what is the problem before God? He has to bring the Royal Line—or, at any rate, a smaller royal line within the fallen house—to the consummation of its destiny, which is to issue from this world to the side of God. But it has missed the way: and I say with the utmost truth, There is nothing wonderful about the Incarnation. It has its parallel every time a father sends out his elder son to look for a lost child.

Now, Christ came to reveal God to man; but to-day, in the light of the Ascension, we need only consider the other aspect: that Christ came to reveal man to man—to reveal what man's capability was; to show what it meant to be a man as God dreamed him; to show that God designed man for worship, as he designed the limpet for the rock, or the snail for the thorn; and, above all, to demonstrate that, if only man loves, obeys, and worships, then there is nothing on this earth that can hold him from his destiny, which is to issue from this world to the side of God.

It must have seemed incredible that the Royal Line, when in the water, could ever have breathed the air above the surface; but it ascended to the lagoons. In the moist air of the marshes, it must have seemed incredible that the line could

ever breathe the dry, rarefied air of the hills; but it ascended to the uplands. There (to push on into spiritual things) it must have seemed incredible that the line could ever breathe the rarefied air of abstract ideals, but, as it ascended in intellect, it produced Gautama, Plato, and the Hebrew Prophets. To us, even at this height, which is where we are now, it may seem incredible that the Royal Line can finally breathe the air of Heaven, and the atmosphere of the angels. But we are there already! The greatest prince of our house has taken his seat. And the Ascension is therefore the feast of the Final Promotion of Man. It is the Feast of the Glorification of Man. As Swinburne said, though he meant something far different: "Glory to Man in the highest, for Man is the master of things." One might almost say that it is the Feast of the Apotheosis of Man. I charge you, therefore, understand these things and worship.

XVIII: THE TALE OF A PHRASE

I

ONE day in the dawn of the fourth century there was playing beneath the Egyptian skies of Alexandria a small boy. He was playing at baptisms. One after another he gathered his friends together, and (let us hope it did not seem so profane to God as it does to us) proceeded to baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. This interest in things ecclesiastical became later a distinct vocation; and the boy, when he was about sixteen, attracted the notice of the old Bishop of Alexandria, Alexander, who took him into his household, made him his secretary, and determined that he should be devoted to the ministry. The boy's name was Athanasius, and we are told that he was small of stature, but with a face radiant like an angel. He early displayed exceptional brilliance, and, when barely twenty, had written some remarkable theological books.

Now, working in the oldest church of Alexandria at that time, was a parish priest called Arius. He was a tall person with a melancholy face, and something sinister, perhaps, in his

manner, but with a voice of singular sweetness. One writer tells us that he had attracted seven hundred ladies to his way of thinking.

I suppose few people in the year 313 A. D. could have foretold that the small youth in Alexander's household and the tall priest were going to fight for the possession of the church. But it was so.

The fuse was lit, the train fired, and the explosion created by the old bishop, Alexander, himself. He had issued a charge to his clergy, in which he insisted very strongly on the doctrine of the Trinity and of our Lord's co-equality with the Father. And Arius, the tall priest, startled the world by accusing his bishop of heresy, and giving his own version of the relation of the Son to the Father.

The doctrine that Arius promulgated, known henceforward as Arianism, was very plausible. It was that Christ was not co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, but the first and greatest of his creatures, created, if you will, before all time, and invested with the attributes of Godhead by the Father: it was crystallised in the sentence, *There was once when Christ was not.*

Arius, having thrown down his challenge and published his faith, showed himself a master of publicity and propaganda. He invented all sorts of catch-phrases and easy rhymes for circulating

among the people, till the boys in the market place, the labourers at their work, and the sailors on the quays were singing and bandying his light rhymes about the Trinity.

Instantly the penetrating intellect of young Athanasius, in Alexander's court, saw that Christianity was at stake. He saw that this subordination of Christ to the Father would make him, not a God, but a vulgar, heathen demigod; and, if Christ was not of the same essence (or *substance*, as the word became known), but only of like essence, then he was very little more than ourselves who are created in the likeness of God, and have much that is divine about us. His mind focussed on the vital point, and he decided that some word proclaiming Christ's *identity of essence* with the father must become the battle-cry of those who would fight Arianism.

Aided and supported by this fervid youngster, who was then a deacon, old Alexander flung back Arianism to its author as a pernicious heresy. War was declared; and the church split like a mirror.

It was then that Constantine the Emperor sent a charming letter to Alexander and Arius, a letter exactly typical of the state's attitude, which so often seeks expediency rather than right. He exhorted them to peace and toleration,

and blamed them for having presumed to discuss so high a theme.

But this was only like a pint of water thrown into a house on fire; and Constantine, the man who had made the Empire officially Christian, decided on a new thing. There should be a great council of all the bishops of the world. Away went his messengers, over Europe, Africa, and Asia Minor, and Britain, summoning the spiritual rulers of Christendom to the Emperor's palace at Nicea, till (as one ancient chronicler says), "the highways were covered with bishops, galloping."

To this day, on the shores of the Ascanian Lake, there are a few broken pillars, which mark the palace of Constantine at Nicea; and to its great hall, in the year 325, came the bishops of the world. It was a fine scene. The seats of the bishops were all along the sides of the apartment, and a golden chair was placed for the Emperor. There was old Bishop Potammon who had lost an eye in Maximin's persecution: there was Paul from the Euphrates, whose hands had been paralysed with a red-hot iron; and there were many other scarred, old confessors, together with some of the younger blood, who had only seen the winter of persecution made glorious by the summer sun of Constantine. But, most arresting of all, was the youth of puny stature, with the face

of animated beauty, Alexander's young deacon, Athanasius.

A signal announced the coming of the Emperor. He entered, and all the bishops rose and gazed with a thrill at the entrance of the Augustus into a Christian synod. The tall, commanding figure, the purple robe, and the diadem (so we are told) were less impressive than the downcast look, the blush of diffidence, and the standing position which he maintained, till his fathers in God motioned him to be seated.

Then the momentous debate began. I will not trouble you with its details. It is enough to say that the storm threw up one great word round which thereafter the controversy beat. That word was *Homo-ousion*. "*Homo*" is the Greek for "*same*," and "*ousion*" for "*essence*"; so the word means "*of the same essence*," or, as we are familiar with it, "*Of one substance*." Young Athanasius saw that it was the only word that could shut out Arianism for ever. Arius would probably have accepted the word, "*Homoi-ousion*," "*of like substance*," but the bishops, largely inspired by the imperious deacon, stood out for, "*Of one substance*." *Homo-ousion*, or *Homoi-ousion*? There's only a difference of one Greek letter, and that the smallest letter in the alphabet "*i*"—which gave Gibbon the opportunity to make his cheap jest that "*the universal*

church fought for a diphthong." But Athanasius saw deeper than that. He saw that with that *iota* Christ stood or fell. Christ resided in an "i." If *Homo-ousion* "of one substance" were beaten by "*Homoi-ousion* "of like substance," then Christianity in a few years would be nothing more than a legend. Finally the Great Council of Nicea inserted into the creed *Homo-ousion*. Day after day we say it: "God of God, Very God of Very God, Begotten, not made, Being of one substance with the Father.

II

But Arius and Arianism were not defeated. They proceeded now by secret diplomacy and backstairs intrigue to overthrow their conquerors; and, most of all, they beat up towards the man they most feared, Athanasius, now Bishop of Alexandria, in succession to his old patron, Alexander, who had died with the ominous words: "Athanasius, thou shalt not escape."

His enemies manufactured a case against him, accusing him of murdering a man called Arsenius; but Athanasius contrived to produce Arsenius in court, alive and well, which rather vexed the prosecution. Then Athanasius left them in scorn, and, after his direct fashion, took a boat straight to Constantinople to lay his innocence

before Constantine. We read that he stopped the Emperor in the middle of the road, as he was riding into the capital. The Emperor was startled. Who was this small man that dared to stand in his path? When told it was Athanasius, poor Constantine, who only wanted peace at any price, looked at him as much as to say, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" and tried to pass by him in silence. But Athanasius was not such a one. That was always the difficulty—you couldn't brush past Athanasius. And the Emperor consented to accord him a trial. But, perhaps thinking that, whether guilty or innocent, such a firebrand were best out of the way, he condemned him to exile.

By such methods Arius and the Arians began to carry all before them, and at last the arch-heretic succeeded in convincing the Emperor of his orthodoxy, and Constantine ordered another Alexander, the venerable Bishop of Constantinople, to receive him into communion in his church on the Golden Horn. But Alexander, old veteran, declared that he was a guardian of the sacred faith proclaimed by the Great Council of Nicea, the *Homo-ousion*, and that he would not admit the inventor of heresy through his doors. The jubilant friends of Arius declared that they would bring him by force in the morning; and

sadly the old prelate turned away. "He bade farewell," says an old writer, "to argument, and took refuge in God." He advanced to his chancel, and flung himself down on its pavement with outstretched hands, and prayed:

"If Arius be brought to Communion to-morrow, let thy servant depart. But, if thou wilt spare thy church, and I know that thou wilt, take away Arius."

Such was the prayer of Alexander that Saturday afternoon; and the same evening, when Arius, flushed with triumph, was walking and conversing with his friends, he suddenly stopped short, withdrew from his companions, and dropped dead.

That, we are assured, is pure history.

III

I wish I had time to tell you how Athanasius, because of his unflinching loyalty to the *Homo-ousion*, suffered exile after exile, always returning in triumph, while the whole of Alexandria streamed out like another Nile (I am quoting a picturesque chronicler) to meet him.

One picture let me give you. Arianism has covered the world like a sea, save for one rock, that aging little figure, Athanasius, Bishop of

Alexandria, supported by all his faithful Alexandrians. Constantius, a successor of Constantine, has determined to drive Athanasius from his stronghold. One night Athanasius is keeping a solemn vigil in the church of St. Thomas, and his faithful are with him. About midnight there is a sudden uproar without, and five thousand soldiers attack the church. At once Athanasius ascended his throne, and ordered the deacon to read the psalm, "For His mercy endureth for ever." There is no doubt that he put himself in the place of honour that the soldiers might recognise him and spare his flock. The doors burst open, the soldiers rushed in, the people fled, calling on their beloved Athanasius to fly with them. "I will not stir," he said, "till you are all away safely"; and he was finally dragged away by his monks. It is always believed that the soldiers elected to be strangely blind.

So Athanasius fled to the African desert, taking with him his flag, the *Homo-ousion*, "of one substance." He was quite unbeaten, and from his lair in the desert he directed such of the church as was still true by letters of instruction and encouragement. He was known as "The Invisible Patriarch"; and for six years he lay hid, but powerful. Thus was given to language the famous phrase: *Athanasius contra mundum*, "Athanasius against the world."

IV

It is an old story to say that the darkest hour precedes the dawn: but that's just what happened here. Constantius died and was succeeded by Julian the Apostate, who sought to re-establish Heathenism. At once the Church began to forget her differences and to close her ranks to meet the threat. Arianism, which had only flourished with the support of the mighty, began gradually to yield ground to the stronger, more life-giving faith of Athanasius. In times of trouble men want Christ to be true God. Athanasius returned to Alexandria for the triumph of his life. The whole city, men, women and children, flocked out to greet him, singing hymns and psalms and *Te Deum*.

At the great Council of Constantinople, some years later, after the death of Julian and the failure of his gallant attempt to restore the old gods, the faith of Nicea, the *Homo-ousion*, was finally ratified.

V

"Of one substance with the Father." Cold, hard words; dry bones; not the words to stir a man's soul.

Well, I don't know. Once a man stood in a

church, and looked up at a faded and torn piece of cloth on a dry and bleached old pole. And he uttered these words:

*“A moth-eaten rag, and a worm-eaten pole—
It doesn’t look likely to stir a man’s soul.
But it’s the deeds that were done ’neath that
moth-eaten rag,
When the pole was a staff, and the rag was a
flag.”*

XIX: THE BELIEVERS

I

OCCASIONALLY, when it falls to my lot to conduct a children's service, and the pews about me are crowded with children, I stand in the pulpit, and, after looking down upon them, surrender to an emotion that is both reverence and humility. I realise that I have before me and around me a congregation of believers. There are no doubters anywhere. There are no critics of the Gospel anywhere, not even friendly critics, still less hostile critics. Nowhere is there a soul, as there may be in a congregation of adults, who longs to believe and can't quite. They believe. Nowhere is there a soul seeking a light that it has lost. They are in the light. I'm not saying that they're very good—perhaps they are fractious and mischievous, and the Lord in his Heaven only knows what may be happening to the hassocks—I'm not measuring them by a standard of morality, but by a standard of faith; and I know that they are the pure believers. And, looking down upon them in front of me and all around me, I know that I am

standing in the Kingdom of God. And I have a moment of fear lest I be something of a stranger among them. I wonder if I am still free of their city.

II

You too, dear people, when you gather in church form a congregation of believers, but in a different and far more mixed way. A great many of you, I doubt not, have fought hard for your faith, and won it, and will never lose it now: but many of you, I dare say, while holding fast to your faith, knowing that you would be lost without it, are yet intellectually confused; some of you have passing attacks of doubt; some of you know that there are parts of your creed, which you prefer to accept than to think about, because they worry you. The difference between us as a congregation and a congregation of children is that we are sophisticated, but they are unsophisticated; we, with our proud intellects, are often wise above what is written, but the children do not worry to be so wise; we are conscious of sins that shoulder out our traffic with Christ, but the children, whom the more I study the more I see to be strangely primitive and unmoral, do not allow their sins to interfere with their faith in Jesus; we have to fight our way

back to the faith of our childhood, but they are still there; our creed is always, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief," but the faith of the children is, "Lord, I believe."

III

I said just now that I believed children to be strangely primitive and unmoral, divorcing morality from religion, and not allowing their sins to interfere with their faith in Christ. And is it not so? Why is Punch's picture so perfectly true?—the picture of a little boy getting into bed, and his mother rebuking him: "What, Tommy! aren't you going to say your prayers first?" and Thomas replying: "No, mother, I think I'm going to take a sporting chance to-night." That was a pure act of wilful sin, a capricious rebellion, a deliberate apostasy, and yet it was based on a perfect faith in an omnipotent God and his claim on our worship. For, if there were no God and no obligation, there was nothing sporting about it.

Or the little girl watching a fly on the window-pane, and finally addressing it: "Ickle fly, does 'oo want to see Dod? 'Oo does? Then—" and *squish!* she has immolated it on the glass with her thumb-nail. How exactly right is the mixture of childish faith and childish cruelty!

I select these stories, because I want to concede the point that our faith may be more credit to us than the faith of children since we have achieved it with thought and worry and prayer, while the faith of children is an effortless thing: but that is not to say that ours is the same measure of faith. It isn't. We never do recapture that first, fine, careless faith of childhood. And it is faith, not nobility and unselfishness though they always go with a grown-up's real faith, that brings us near to God. According to our faith is it unto us. It is perhaps difficult to see why a child, with its low ethical standard and its weak, vacillating will, is, in the short space of its childhood, nearer God than a saintly adult who has triumphed over his sin and schooled himself for Christ's sake. Surely, you say, this latter is a stronger servant of God. Or, since it is faith, and not morality, that brings men near to God, surely this man whose faith has issued gloriously from the fires of suffering is a greater citizen of the Kingdom of God. Which is really the greater? Jesus took a little child and set him in the midst of them.

IV

So, if I had to appeal for the Church's support for her Sunday schools and for others of her min-

istrations to children, the note that I would strike would *not* be the duty of the strong to support the weak—of the great to support the small, but, rather, the duty of the weak to sustain the strong, and of us smaller folk to support our great ones in the Kingdom of Heaven. In a word, let us preserve our saints. Let us be proud of these our citizens who occupy the high places; because in them we are nearest God. They are our most forward point.

The Church that ceases to care for its children is doomed. And *not* because of the obvious reason that they are the coming generation, who shall build when we have laid down our tools, though that is true, and worth considering: and *not* because it has been well said that, if the children are given to the church till they are twelve years old, it hardly matters what happens to them afterwards, though there is a great deal of truth in that. I used to be doubtful about it, and wondered if we didn't overdo the church-going of the choir-boy, for example, so that he would never want to set foot in a church again. But my experience in the war shook my doubts. I know that whenever I set up my little altar in a French or Belgian wood, or when I gathered together a little evensong on the seaward slope of some Gallipoli ravine, in the violet light of sundown, there were few enough who cared to come, God

knows, but the ex-choir boy was generally there. The service was in his blood. And I learned what was meant by the truth of the saying: "Once a choir-boy, always a churchman." As sure as he was within hearing or seeing distance, he came down the ravine side, polishing up the buttons of his tunic, at the first sound of "O God, our help in ages past," or "My soul doth magnify the Lord"; and, I verily believe, at the first sight of a white surplice. These things echoed from the playgrounds of the Kingdom, where he trifled as a child.

But it is not for that reason that I say the church is doomed that ceases to care for its children. It is doomed simply because in its children it is nearest God. It must preserve its saints.

v

And we know it. Not the least beautiful thing in erring and sinful men is their determination to protect the faith of their children. Englishmen who are shy of revealing their deeper thoughts would probably say they do it because they want to give their children a fair chance. It isn't that: it is just because the idea that—whatever themselves may be—their children should be out of touch with God is revolting to them. Do

you know any father who, though sceptical and critical himself, would like to hear little Georgie maintaining atheistic opinions over the breakfast table? Of course not. They have an instinct that the children, at all costs, must be close to God. They are probably quite hurt if their wife is not, too; but, at all costs, the child. One member of the family, at least, must be in touch with Heaven. And what is right for the family is right for the church. We are proud of our great believers, and at all costs we'll protect their faith. I wonder what may be the value to the church of the prayers of the children, according to whose faith things are given unto them.

VI

We must do our part by them and by their schools.

I remember one Sunday morning when I reproached them severely. I was saying: "You just turn up, and expect everything to be provided for you—a building, books, teachers, and above all, a treat. You take it too much for granted. You just turn up."

And I went out into the street, wishing I hadn't said it. It was in every way the wrong thing. That they take everything for granted;

that they just turn up; that they expect some one will see to it that the roof remains intact over their heads; and the fire is lighted on cold winter mornings; and the gas is lit on dark winter afternoons; and, above all, that there is a treat in summer days, with swings and roundabouts and ice-cream cornets and abundant opportunities for making an infernal noise in green and leafy places; that they take all this for granted, and just turn up expecting it—what is it but the faith of which I have been speaking? Their faith in us is like their faith in God.

And we are agreed that we mustn't injure their gift for faith by failing it.

It is sometimes the fashion to launch an emotional appeal for children's hospitals by picturing the sick children with outstretched hands, asking the help of the passers-by. Don't think of them like that. For they never stretch out their hands and ask people to feed and minister to them. They just sit up and expect it. They take it for granted, and know that some one will provide for them: as sure as it is four o'clock they sit up in their red night-gowns in their beds, and assume that somebody will bring them tea.

And somebody does: and you and I pay our share. Jesus saw it. He was often very severe indeed on all that is wrong in men—very outspoken and unpleasant—when he really "let go"

on their cant and their humbug and their cruelties; but he paid us one great compliment; which was deserved then as it is deserved now. He said: "You men, although you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children."

XX: THE SEVEN SEALS

I

ST. JOHN the Divine, languishing on Patmos, saw a door opened in Heaven, and heard a voice summoning him: "Come up hither, and I will show thee things that must be hereafter." And immediately, as in a dream, he seemed to be translated through that door, and to stand in a brilliant audience-chamber. He dares not name the One Whom he saw sitting on the throne, but it was God, completely encircled by a rainbow, the symbol of His faithfulness. In front of the throne there were four worshipping beasts; one like a lion, another like an ox, a third like a man, and a fourth like an eagle, flying. The worship of these beasts probably represents the unconscious worship of nature: as thus:—the lion, tearing through the undergrowth, rejoices in his strength, and thereby unwittingly worships God; the patient-eyed ox, dragging the plough, ministers to man, and God accepts his slow, quiet service; man goes to his day's work in the morning, and returns at evening, and sings and sleeps and is happy; and, in

so doing, is obedient and pleasing to his Maker; the eagle soars into the upper air, and his very *joie-de-vivre* is savoury praise with God. So the four beasts are portrayed as singing: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God the Ruler, Who wast, and art, and evermore shalt be."

Then, round about the throne, are twenty-four elders, who depict the conscious, organised worship of Churchmanship—the very number suggests the twelve patriarchs of the old Church, and the twelve princes of the new. They sing a *new* song, grander and more articulate than the simple, instinctive worship of nature that blindly acknowledged the existence of God in the words: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God the Ruler." There is thought and reason and a sense of causation in the song of the twenty-four elders: "Thou art worthy, O our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honour and the power, for thou didst create all things and because of thy will they are and were created."

II

And John saw that on the right hand of Him that sat on the throne there was a book, closely sealed with seven seals. And a strong angel cried out: "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?" And no one in Heaven or

earth or under the earth was able to open the book or look into it.

Now, in order to understand the tremendous truth that is coming, we must be told in advance what the book contains. It speaks of militarism, war, famine, high prices, even food control, I think, and death, the Shades on the other side of Death, a little goodness, the endurance of a few faithful people, and the end of hunger and thirst and tears—in a sentence, it is the book of our world, the long, closely written riddle; and who on earth can read it? John, when he found nobody could read it, wept, as ten thousand other philosophers have done, agnostics especially, when they have regretfully come to the conclusion that, apart from revealed religion, there is no reading the riddles of life and pain and the destiny of man. But one of the elders, a voice from the church, turned to John and said (and this is the tremendous truth): “Do not weep. The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed, and will open the book and break its seven seals.” Christ alone holds the key to man’s world.

Then—mark the position—midway between the throne and the four living creatures (midway between God and Nature, that is), among the elders (with the holders of revealed religion, you see), John saw a lamb. Note the surprise. He

was told a lion, and he saw a lamb: the Lion of the Old and fiercer Dispensation is revealed as the Lamb of the New. This central figure, the only figure in the world that could do it, walked up to the throne, and deliberately took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat there. Immediately the four beasts, and the twenty-four elders burst out into a new song:

“It is fitting (I am translating the old words into newer terms) that Thou shouldst be the one to take the book,

And break its seals,

Because Thou hast been offered in sacrifice.”

All nature, you see, and the Church, in this vision, acknowledge the right of Christ to solve the mystery of the world. Heaven joins in. The voices of countless angels, on every side the throne, ten thousand times ten thousand, sing with a great voice:

“It is fitting that the Lamb, which has been offered in sacrifice, should receive all power and riches and wisdom, and might and honour and glory and blessing.”

III

So, with a great chorus of song, we are brought to the moment of the breaking of the seven seals.

Just as often in a fantasy on the stage, if an actor is represented as reading a book, the contents of the book are shown in moving tableaux behind him, so here, as seal after seal is broken, a series of pictures breaks on the audience, revealing what is to be read therein.

The Lamb broke the first seal, and a voice cried, "Come!" (not "Come and see!" which would appear to be addressed to the audience, but "Come!", invoking an apparition). And there came a white horse carrying a rider with a bow; and to him was given a victor's wreath, and he went out conquering, and to conquer. The fathers always interpreted this figure as Christ, but I think they were wrong, or else there is no logical and convincing sequence in the series of pictures. It is not a good figure, it is an evil figure. It is Militarism, and his horse is white, because the blood is not yet shed.

The Lamb broke the second seal, and a voice cried: "Come!" And there came a red horse, and power was given to its rider to take peace from the earth, and to cause men to kill one another, and a great sword was given him. Clearly the red horse is the consequence of militarism, blood-letting War.

The Lamb broke the third seal, and a voice cried: "Come!" And there came a black horse, its rider carrying a trader's scale in his hand, and

a voice called: "A quart of wheat for a shilling, and three quarts of barley for a shilling, but do not injure the oil and wine." The black horse is the consequence of militarism and war, famine, with high prices. Rendered into modern terms that high prices cry might be given as: "A shilling for a twopenny loaf, and milk at two shillings a quart. Economise petrol, and save coal."

The Lamb broke the fourth seal, and a voice cried: "Come!" And there came a pale horse, and its rider's name was Death, the consequence of militarism and war and famine; and there rode a shadow hard behind him.

Such are the things revealed by the breaking of the first four seals; and who can deny that they are the recurring story of this our world? The book is sad and heavy reading so far. But stay—

The Lamb broke the fifth seal, and lo! an altar, the only solution, the altar of Christ, and, at its foot, the souls of those whose lives had been sacrificed, because of the word of God and the testimony they had given. No sooner is the seal broken than they recognise their master and cry: "How long, O Master, Holy and True? How long? How long?" And gently there is given to each of them a white robe, and they are bidden to wait patiently for a short time longer, till the

full number of their fellow-servants shall be complete.

Then the Lamb broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the stars fell in showers from the sky, as when the fruit falls from the trees in a gale of wind; and the sky rolled itself up like a scroll; and the kings of the earth and the great men, and the military chiefs, and the wealthy and powerful,—all, that is, who had sought only their own glory at the expense of the suffering of their fellow-men,—hid themselves, as the things that were transitory passed away, along with the mountains and the islands and the sea.

But the true souls, who had been given white robes at the altar's foot, and all the others who had been gathered to them, were sealed as the servants of God: not only the one hundred and forty-four thousand, as we are wont to think, but a great multitude which no man could number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues; and they stood before the throne in their white robes and cried:

"The Salvation that is ours we owe unto our God and to the Lamb."

And all the angels endorsed this ascription:

*"Even so (not Amen), even so," they cried,
"The blessing and the glory,*

*And the wisdom and the thanks,
And the honour and the power and the might,
Are to be ascribed unto our God,
Even so, even so."*

Then one of the elders, addressing St. John, said: "Now, do you see? Do you understand it all? The misery, and the warfare, and the famine and the death, that sin has brought into the world, and the only sanctuary, the foot of the altar, among those who recognise Christ as their master, and distinguish between the things that are temporal and the things that are eternal. Do you understand it all? Tell me, who are these clothed in white robes, and whence came they?"

And John bowed his head, as one does who has learned his lesson, and murmured:

"Sir, thou knowest."

To which the elder, summing up the whole matter, answered:

"These are they which have come through the tribulation, and have kept their robes white, washing them in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living

fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

Then the Lamb broke the seventh seal; and there was silence in Heaven for about half an hour—a silence as of work completed.

THE END.

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